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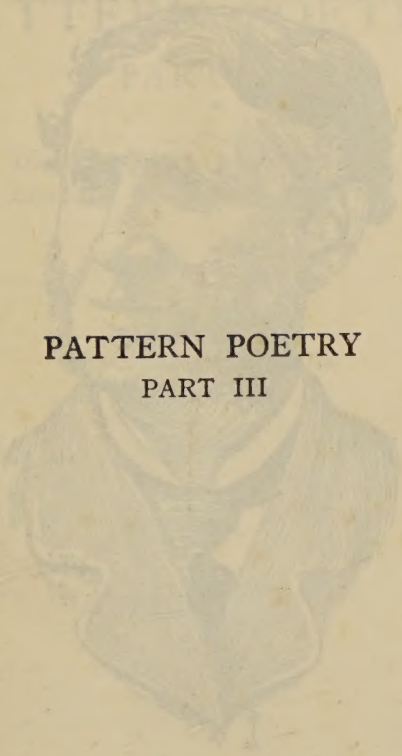

PATTERN POETRY
PART III

No. 90

MATTHEW ARNOLD

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

PATTERN POETRY

PART III

LONGER POEMS RANGING FROM
CHAUCER TO FRANCIS THOMPSON

Edited by
RICHARD WILSON

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PREFACE

HERE are some of the things which will be

" As fresh as is the month of May "

when Macaulay's New Zealander wanders amazedly among the heaps of red-grey dust which represent all that is left of ferro-concrete London. He will probably have a volume containing some of them in his pocket, heavily annotated and partly translated.

I do not claim that I have always topped the peaks in this rapid journey through the realm of English poetry which begins with the trampling of the horses of Chaucer's pilgrims and ends with the

" Deliberate speed, majestic instancy "

of Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven.* A selection of this kind must always be more or less personal, even if it is not individual, and I draw the attention of critics to the fact that the thing can easily be done again and again and yet again by themselves, and ever so much better ; such is the marvellous range, infinite variety, and fullness of volume of the poetry of our " strong, silent " race.

These are " pattern poems " in the sense that they provide a touchstone for other verse which claims to be poetry. On the whole, imitation on the part of poetasters is unthinkable, though I have suggested, here and there, a few exercises which may prove interesting and revealing ; asking forgiveness from those teachers who do not need hints from me.

For permission to use A. C. Swinburne's *The Swimmer's Dream* I am indebted to Messrs. W. Heinemann, Ltd., and for a similar courtesy in connection with Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven,* to Mr. Wilfred Meynell.

R. W.

"By nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

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* *Published as a separate booklet by Burns, Oates, and Washbourne.*

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,—
The songs I sing here ; which his mouth
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
Finding some knowledge at each pause,
And some new thing to know."

D. G. ROSSETTI, *The Blessèd Damozel.*

PATTERN POETRY

PART III

THE PROLOGUE TO THE "CANTERBURY TALES"

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340 ?–1400)

WHAN that Aprille with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour ;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open yë,
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages) :
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
(And palmers for to seken straunge strondes)
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes ;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,

Sote, Sweet.
Corages, Hearts.
Couthe, Known.
Swich licour, Such moisture.
Ferne halwes, Distant shrines of saints.

The holy blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.
Bifel that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At night was come in-to that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde ;
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste.
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon.
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree ;
And eek in what array that they were inne :
And at a knight than wol I first biginne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden (no man ferre)
As wel in Christendom as hethenesse,
And ever honoured for his worthinesse.

Were seke, Were sick. *Esed atte beste*, Entertained in the best way.
Ferther in this tale pace, Go further with this tale.
Array, Clothing, equipment, etc. *Ferre*, Farther.

At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne ;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce,
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the sege eek hadde he be
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye,
At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,
Whan they were wonne ; and in the Grete See
At many a noble aryve hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for our feith at Tramissene
In listes thryes, and ay slayn his fo.
This ilke worthy knight had been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,
Ageyn another hethen in Turkye :
And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.
He was a verray parfit gentil knight.
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors were gode, but he was nat gay.
Of fustian he wered a gipoun
Al bismotered with his habergeoun ;
For he was late y-come from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.

Bord bigonne, Sat at the head of the table. *Pruce*, Prussia.
Lettow, Lithuania. *Reysed*, Gone on a military expedition.
Ruce, Russia. *Aryve*, Landing.
Sovereyn prys, High reputation. *Maner wight*, Kind of creature.
Gipoun, Doublet. *Bismotered*, Marked with spots of rust.
Habergeoun, Hauberk. *Viage*, Expedition.
Crulle, Curly.

Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and greet of strengthe.
And he had been somtyme in chivachye,
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
And born him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede.
Singinge he was, or floytinge, al the day ;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his goune, with sleves longe and wyde.
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
He coude songes make and wel endyte,
Juste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte.
So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale.
Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

A YEMAN hadde he, and servaunts namo
At that tyme, for him liste ryde so ;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene :
A sheef of pecok-arwes brighte and kene
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily ;
(Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly :
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.
A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage.
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other syde a gay daggere,

Of evene lengthe, Straight, upright.
Chivachye, Military expedition.
A mede, Meadow (with daisies).
By nightertale, At night.
Pecok-arwes, Arrows with peacocks' feathers.
Not heed, Cropped head.
Deliver, Active.
Embrouded, Embroidered.
Floytinge, Playing on the flute.
Carf, Carved.
Bracer, Guard for the arm in archery.

Harneised wel, and sharp as point of spere ;
A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene ;
A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy ;
Hir gretteste ooth was but by sëynt Loy ;
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful wel she song the service divyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely ;
And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,
For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.
At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle ;
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.
In curteisye was set ful muche hir lest.
Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,
That in hir coppe was no ferthing sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,
And sikerly she was of greet disport,
And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,
And peyned hir to countrefete chere
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But, for to speken of hir conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde

Cleped, Named.
Lest, Pleasure.
Ferthing, A very small portion.
Fetisly, Elegantly.
Coppe, Cup.
Peyned . . . court, She took pains to preserve an appearance of courtliness.

With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte :
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely hir wimpel pinched was ;
Hir nose tretys ; hir eyen greye as glas ;
Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed ;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed ;
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe ;
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war.
Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene ;
And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*

Another NONNE with hir hadde she,
That was hir CHAPELEYNE, and PREESTES three.

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye,
An out-rydere, that lovede venerye ;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable :
And, whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here
Ginglen in a whistling wind as clere,
And eek as loude as dooth the chapel-belle
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.
The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,
This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the space.

Wastel-breed, Cake-bread.
Yerde, Yard stick.
Tretys, Well-proportioned.
A fair, A good one.
Smoot, Smote.
Smerte, Sharply, smartly.
Fetis, Handsome, well-made.
For the maistrye, As regards authority.
Out-rydere, One who rode out from the monastery to inspect farms.
Venerye, Hunting.

He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen.
That seith, that hunters been nat holy men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is cloisterlees,
Is lykned til a fish that is waterlees;
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloistre.
But thilke text held he nat worth an oistre;
And I seyde, his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure,
Or swinken with his handes, and laboure,
As Austin bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austin have his swink to him reserved.
Therfore he was a pricasour aright;
Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight;
Of priking and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And, for to festne his hood under his chin,
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pin:
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he had been anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point;
His eyen stepe, and rollinge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His botes souple, his hors in greet estat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelat;
He was nat pale as a for-pyned goost.
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

Yaf nat, Cared not a jot.
Wood, Mad.
As Austin bit, As Saint Augustine bids.
Priking, Spurring.
Grys, Grey squirrel.
A pulled hen, A drawn fowl.
Swinken, Toil.
Pricasour, Hard rider.
Purfiled, Trimmed.
Stepe, Bright.
Stemed, Shone.
Forneys of a leed, Fire beneath a cauldron or copper.
For-pyned, Wasted away (by torment).

A FRERE ther was, a wantown and a merye,
A limitour, a ful solempne man,
In alle the ordres foure is noon that can
So muche of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen, at his owne cost.
Un-to his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over-al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun:
For he had power of confessioun,
As seyde him-self, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licentiat.
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitaunce;
For unto a povre ordre for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel y-shrive.
For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may nat wepe al-thogh him sore smerte.
Therfore, in stede of weping and preyeres,
Men moot yeve silver to the povre freres.
His tipet was ay farsed ful of knyves
And pinnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a mery note;
Wel coude he singe and pleyen on a rote.
Of yeddinges he bar utterly the prys.
His nekke whyt was as the flour-de-lys;
Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And everich hostiler and tappestere

Limitour, A friar licensed to beg for alms within a certain limit.
Can, Knows.
Avaunt, Boast.
Rote, A kind of fiddle of Celtic origin.
Yaf, Gave.
Farsed, Stuffed.
Yeddinges, Songs.

Bet than a lazar or a beggestere ;
For un-to swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with seke lazars aqueyntaunce,
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
For to delen with no swich poraille,
But all with riche and sellers of vitaille.
And over-al, ther as profit sholde aryse,
Curteys he was, and lowly of servyse.
Ther nas no man no-wher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous ;
And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt ;
Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt ;
For thogh a widwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his "*In principio*,"
Yet wolde he have a ferthing, er he wente.
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he coude, as it were right a whelpe.
In love-dayes ther coude he muchel helpe.
For there he was nat lyk a cloisterer,
With a thredbar cope, as is a povre scoler,
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worsted was his semi-cope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse,
To make his English swete up-on his tonge ;
And in his harping, whan that he had songe,
His eyen twinkled in his heed aright,
As doon the sterres in the frosty night.
This worthy limitour was cleped Huberd.

A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,
In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat,
Up-on his heed a Flaundrish bever hat ;
His botes clasped faire and fetisly.

Lazar, Leper.
Ther as, Wherever.
Sho, Shoe.
Poraille, Poor people.
Ferme, Rent.

His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Souninge alway th'encrees of his winning.
He wolde the see were kept for any thing
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.
Wel coude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette ;
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So estatly was he of his governaunce,
With his bargaynes, and with his chevisaunce.
For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,
But sooth to seyn, I noot how men him calle.

A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That un-to logik hadde longe y-go.
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake ;
But loked holwe, and ther-to soberly.
Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy ;
For he had geten him yet no benefyce,
Ne was so worldly for to have offyce.
For him was lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre ;
But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,
On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye.
Of studie took he most cure and most hede.
Noght o word spak he more than was nede,

Souninge, Relating.
Chevisaunce, Borrowing.
Y-go, Devoted himself.
Was lever have, Would rather have.
Sautrye, Psaltery, a kind of harp.
Hente, Gain.
Kept, Kept safe (from pirates).
Noot how, etc., I do not know his name.
Overest courtepy, Top coat.
Fithele, Fiddle.
Al be that, Although.
Scoleye, Study.

And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence.
Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence :
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wyse.
Justyce he was ful often in assyse,
By patente, and by pleyn commissioun ;
For his science, and for his heigh renoun
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was no-wher noon.
Al was fee simple to him in effect,
His purchasing mighte nat been infect.
No-wher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and domes alle,
That from the tyme of king William were falle.
Therto he coude endyte, and make a thing,
Ther coude no wight pinche at his wryting ;
And every statut coude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale ;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A FRANKELEYN was in his companye ;
Whyt was his berd, as is the dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn.
To liven in delyt was ever his wone,

Hy sentence, Lofty meaning.
Parvys, Church porch, where local judgments were delivered.
Caas, Cases of law. *Domes*, Judgments.
Wryting, Legal document. *Coude he pleyn by rote*, Knew by heart.
Medlee cote, A coat of mixed colour; motley. *Ceint*, Sash.
By the morwe, Early in the morning. *Wone*, Custom.

For he was Epicurus owne sone,
That heeld opinioun, that pleyn delyt
Was verraily felicitee parfyt.
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he ;
Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His breed, his ale, was alwey after oon ;
A bettre envyned man was no-wher noon.
With-oute bake mete was never his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plentevous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of alle deyntees that men coude thinke.
After the sondry sesons of the yeer,
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stewe.
Wo was his cook, but-if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire ;
Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the shire.
An anlas and a gipser al of silk
Heng at his girdel, whyt as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour ;
Was no-wher such a worthy vavasour.

An Haberdassher and a Carpenter,

A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapicer,
Were with us eek, clothed in o liveree,
Of a solempne and greet fraternitee.

Seint Julian, Protector of way-farers.
Envyned, Stored with wine.
Luce, Pike.
Table dormant, A permanent side table; sideboard.
Anlas, Short two-edged dagger.
Gipser, Purse.
Countour, Auditor.
Vavasour, Sub-vassal, next in dignity to a baron.
Webbe, Weaver.
Tapicer, Upholsterer.
Clothed in o liveree, Each in one livery (of a religious gild).
After oon, Equally good.
Snewed, Abounded.

Ful fresh and newe hir gere apyked was ;
Hir knyves were y-chaped noght with bras,
But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,
Hir girdles and hir pouches every-deel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys,
To sitten in a yeldhalle on a deys.
Everich, for the wisdom that he can,
Was shaply for to been an alderman.
For catel hadde they y-nogh and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente ;
And elles certein were they to blame.
It is ful fair to been y-clept '*ma dame*,'
And goon to vigilyës al bifore,
And have a mantel royalliche y-bore.

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,
To boille the chiknes with the mary-bones,
And poudre-marchant tart, and galingale,
Wel coude he knowe a draughte of London ale.
He coude roste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Maken mortreux and wel bake a pye.
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shine a mormal hadde he ;
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

A Shipman was ther, woning fer by weste :
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood up-on a rouncy, as he couthe,
In a gowne of falding to the knee.
A daggere hanging on a laas hadde he

Apyked, Trimmed.
Y-chaped, Capped with metal at the end of the sheath.
Yeldhalle, Guildhall.
He can, He possessed.
Deys, Dais.
Mary-bones, Marrow-bones.
Poudre-marchant tart, A pungent kind of spice.
Galingale, A sweet spice.
Mortreux, Thickened soup or pottage.
Shine, Shin.
Mormal, Sore.
Woning, Living.
Rouncy, Nag.
Falding, Kind of coarse cloth.
Laas, Lace.

Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hote somer had maad his hewe all broun ;
And, certeinly, he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn had he y-drawe
From Burdeux-ward, whyl that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
His stremes and his daungers him bisydes,
His herberwe and his mone, his lode-menage,
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake ;
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew wel alle the havenes, as they were,
From Gootlond to the cape of Finistere,
And every cryke in Britayne and in Spayne ;
His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.

With us there was a Doctour of Phisyk,
In al this world ne was ther noon him lyk
To speke of phisik and of surgerye ;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient a ful greet del
In houres, by his magik naturel.
Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his images for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot or cold, or moiste, or drye,
And where engendred, and of what humour ;
He was a verrey parfit practisour.
The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the rote,
Anon he yaf the seke man his bote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries,

Chapman, Merchant.
Mone, Moon.
Herberwe, Harbour.
Lode-menage, Pilotage.
Fortunen the ascendent of his images, Give good health (to his patient) by observation of the stars.
Bote, Remedy.

To sende him drogges and his letuaries,
For ech of hem made other for to winne ;
Hir frendschipe nas nat newe to biginne.
Wel knew he th'olde Esculapius,
And Deiscorides, and eek Rufus,
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien ;
Serapion, Razis, and Avicen ;
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn ;
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissing and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the bible.
In sangwin and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal ;
And yet he was but esy of dispence ;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therfore he lovede gold in special.

A good WYF was ther of bisyde Bathe,
But she was som-del deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-making she hadde swiche an haunt,
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
That to th' offring bifore hir sholde goon ;
And if ther dide, certeyn, so wrooth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground ;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a Sonday were upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful moiste and newe.

Letuaries, Electuaries, *i.e.* powders mixed with honey or syrup.
Sangwin, Stuff of a blood-red colour.
Pers, Stuff of a sky-blue colour.
Scathe, A pity.
Coverchiefs, Kerchiefs worn on the head.
Esy of dispence, Frugal.
An haunt, Skill.
Moiste, Supple.

Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve,
Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten other companye in youthe ;
But thereof nedeth nat to speke as nouthe.
And thryes hadde she been at Jerusalem ;
She hadde passed many a straunge streem ;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at seint Jame, and at Coloigne.
She coude muche of wandring by the weye :
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Up-on an amblere esily she sat,
Y-wimpled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe ;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felawschip wel coude she laughe and carpe.
Of remedyes of love she knew perchaunce,
For she coude of that art the olde daunce.

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre PERSOUN OF A TOUN ;
But riche he was of holy thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche ;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient ;
And swich he was y-preved ofte sythes.
Ful looth were him to cursen for his tythes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Un-to his povre parisshens aboute
Of his offring, and eek of his substaunce.

At chirche-dore, Where weddings were celebrated.
Withouten, As well as. *As nouthe*, At present.
Coude, Knew.
Gat-tothed, Gap-toothed, *i.e.* with teeth far apart.
Carpe, Converse in a bantering manner. *Ofte sythes*, Oftentimes.

He coude in litel thing han suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer a-sonder,
But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknes nor in meschief, to visyte
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lyte,
Up-on his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte;
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
And this figure he added eek ther-to,
That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a preest take keep,
A foule shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
By his clennesse, how that his sheep shold live.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre,
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to London, un-to sëynt Poules,
To seken him a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat miscarie;
He was a shepherde and no mercenarie.
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinful man nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his teching discreet and benigne.
To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse
By good ensample, was his bisinesse:
But it were any persone obstinat,
What-so he were, of heigh or lowe estat,
Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.

Lafte, Omitted.
Muche and lyte, Great and small.
To ruste, To be befouled.
Snibben, Reprove.
Meschief, Misfortune.
Lewed, Unlearned.
Digne, Disdainful.
For the nones, For the occasion.

A bettre preest, I trowe that nowher noon is.
He wayted after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spyced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.

With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother,
A trewe swinker and a good was he,
Livinge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hole herte
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde thresshe, and ther-to dyke and delve.
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hyre, if it lay in his might.
His tythes payed he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swink and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.
Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,
A Somnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and my-self ; ther were namo.

The MILLER was a stout carl, for the nones,
Ful big he was of braun, and eek of bones ;
That proved wel, for over-al ther he cam,
At wrastling he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre,
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it, at a renning, with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.
Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade

Fother, Cart-load.
Gamed, Jested.
The ram, The prize in the wrestling match.
Thikke knarre, Thickset fellow.
Harre, Hinge.
Swinker, Toiler.
Catel, Goods.
Cop, Top.

A werte, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,
Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres ;
His nose-thirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde ;
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
And that was most of sinne and harlotryes.
Wel coude he stelen corn, and tollen thryes ;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whyt cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepype wel coude he blowe and sowne,
And ther-with-al he broghte us out of towne.

A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours mighte take exemple
For to be wyse in bying of vitaille
For whether that he payde, or took by taille,
Algate he wayted so in his achat,
That he was ay biforn and in good stat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men ?
Of maistres hadde he mo than thryes ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious ;
Of which ther were a doseyn in that hous
Worthy to been stiwardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To make him live by his propre good,
In honour dettelees, but he were wood,
Or live as scarsly as him list desire ;
And able for to helpen al a shire

Nose-thirles, Nostrils.
Janglere, Jester.
Tollen thryes, Take toll thrice.
Forneys, Furnace.
Goliardeys, Buffoon.
Maunciple, An officer who purchased victuals for an inn or college; a kind of steward, or caterer.
Achatours, Caterers.
Taille, Tally.
Algate, At any rate.
Wayted so, Watched his chances so carefully.
Achat, Purchase.
Lewed, Ignorant.
But he were wood, Except he were mad.

In any cas that mighte falle or happe ;
And yit this maunciple sette hir aller cappe.

The REVE was a sclendre colerik man,
His berd was shave as ny as ever he can.
His heer was by his eres round y-shorn.
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel coude he kepe a gerner and a binne ;
Ther was noon auditour coude on him winne.
Wel wiste he, by the droghte, and by the reyn,
The yielding of his seed, and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
Was hoolly in this reves governing,
And by his covenaunt yaf the rekening,
Sin that his lord was twenty yeer of age ;
Ther coude no man bringe him in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne ;
They were adrad of him, as of the deeth.
His woning was ful fair up-on an heeth,
With grene treës shadwed was his place.
He coude bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was astored prively,
His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene him of his owne good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he lerned hadde a good mister ;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This reve sat up-on a ful good stot,

Hir aller cappe, Made fools of them all.
Neet . . . stoor, Store or stock on a farm ; hence cattle.
Arrerage, Arrears.
Hyne, Peasant, hind, agricultural worker.
Sleighte, Slyness, deceitfulness (*cf.* " sleight of hand ").
Covyne, Deceitfulness.
Woning, Dwelling.
Lene, Lend.
Mister, Trade.
Stot, Horse.

That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers up-on he hade,
And by his syde he bar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this reve, of which I telle,
Bisyde a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
Tukked he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And ever he rood the hindreste of our route.

A SOMNOUR was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubinnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe ;
With scalled browes blake, and piled berd ;
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quik-silver, litarge, ne brimstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That him mighte helpen of his whelkes whyte,
Nor of the knobbes sittinge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drinken strong wyn, reed as blood.
Than wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or three,
That he had lerned out of som decree ;
No wonder is, he herde it al the day ;
And eek ye knowen wel, how that a jay
Can clepen " Watte," as well as can the pope.
But who-so coude in other thing him grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophye ;

Pomely, Dappled.
Pers, Stuff of a sky-blue colour.
Somnour, An officer who summoned offenders to appear at the Church courts.
Sawcefleem, Covered with pimples.
Scalled, Scabbed.
Litarge, Lead ointment.
Whelkes, Pimples.
Highte, Called.
Tukked, Tucked.
Piled berd, Thin beard.
Ceruce, White lead.
Grope, Examine or test.

Ay " *Questio quid iuris* " wolde he crye.
He was a gentil harlot and a kinde ;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght finde.
He wolde suffre, for a quart of wyn,
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelf-month, and excuse him atte fulle :
Ful prively a finch eek coude he pulle.
And if he fond o-wher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have non awe,
In swich cas, of the erchedeknes curs,
But-if a mannes soule were in his purs ;
For in his purs he sholde y-punisshed be.
" Purs is the erchedeknes helle," seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede ;
Of cursing oghte ech gilty man him drede—
For curs wol slee, right as assoilling saveth—
And also war him of a *significavit.*
In daunger hadde he at his owne gyse
The yonge girles of the diocyse,
And knew hir counseil, and was al hir reed.
A gerland hadde he set up-on his heed,
As greet as it were for an ale-stake ;
A bokeler hadde he maad him of a cake.

With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER
Of Rouncival, his freend and his compeer,
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
Ful loude he song, " Com hider, love, to me."

" *Questio quid iuris*," The question is, how stands the law.
Harlot, A person of humble birth, fellow ; used familiarly.
Finch eek coude he pulle, Deceive a dupe.
Erchedeknes, Archdeacon's. *But-if*, Unless, except.
Assoilling, Absolving from sin. *War him*, Let him beware.
Significavit, A writ of excommunication.
Gyse, Way, plan, manner, custom.
Was al hir reed, Was adviser to all of them.
Ale-stake, A short pole projecting from an ale-house to support a bush, the sign of an inn. (Hence the saying, "Good wine needs no bush.")

This somnour bar to him a stif burdoun,
Was never trompe of half so greet a soun.
This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heng, as dooth a strike of flex ;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And ther-with he his shuldres over-spradde ;
But thinne it lay, by colpons oon and oon ;
But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walet.
Him thoughte, he rood al of the newe jet ;
Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glaringe eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernicle hadde he sowed on his cappe.
His walet lay biforn him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne never sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave ;
I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwik into Ware,
Ne was ther swich another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that, he seyde, was our lady veyl :
He seyde, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That sëynt Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Up-on the see, til Jesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwelling up-on lond,

Bar to him a stif burdoun, Kept up a bass accompaniment to his song.
Strike, a hank.
Colpons, Shreds.
Ounces, Small portions.
Jet, Fashion, mode.
Dischevele, With his hair hanging loosely down.
Vernicle, A copy of the fine cloth on which Christ's features are said to have been miraculously impressed.
Bret-ful, Brimful.
Pilwe-beer, Pillow-case.
Male, Bag or wallet.
Gobet, Fragment.
Latoun, Metal compounded chiefly of copper and zinc.

Up-on a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye.
And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,
He made the person and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen, atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel coude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie ;
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affyle his tonge,
To winne silver, as he ful wel coude ;
Therfore he song so meriely and loude.
Now have I told you shortly, in a clause,
Th'estat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this companye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke night,
Whan we were in that hostelrye alight.
And after wol I telle of our viage,
And al the remenaunt of our pilgrimage.
But first I pray yow, of your curteisye,
That ye n'arette it nat my vileinye,
Thogh that I pleynly speke in this matere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir chere ;
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes properly.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce, as ny as ever he can,
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large ;
Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thing, or finde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, al-thogh he were his brother ;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak him-self ful brode in holy writ,

N'arette it nat, Consider it not. *Brode*, Plainly.

And wel ye woot, no vileinye is it.
Eek Plato seith, who-so that can him rede,
The wordes mote be cosin to the dede.
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Here in this tale, as that they sholde stonde ;
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
Greet chere made our hoste us everichon,
And to the soper sette us anon ;
And served us with vitaille at the beste.
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drinke us leste.
A semely man our hoste was with-alle
For to han been a marshal in an halle ;
A large man he was with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe :
Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel y-taught,
And of manhod him lakkede right naught.
Eek therto he was right a mery man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of mirthe amonges othere thinges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekeninges ;
And seyde thus : " Now, lordinges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome hertely :
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye
At ones in this herberwe as is now.
Fayn wolde I doon yow mirthe, wiste I how.
And of a mirthe I am right now bithoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
Ye goon to Caunterbury ; God yow spede,
The blisful martir quyte yow your mede.
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye ;
For trewely, confort ne mirthe is noon
To ryde by the weye doumb as a stoon ;
And therfore wol I maken yow disport,

Herberwe, Lodging, shelter. *Quyte*, Requite.
Talen, Tell tales.

As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if yow lyketh alle, by oon assent,
Now for to stonden at my jugement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
To-morwe, whan ye ryden by the weye,
Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,
But ye be merye, I wol yeve yow myn heed.
Hold up your hond, withouten more speche."
Our counseil was nat longe for to seche ;
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted him withouten more avys,
And bad him seye his verdit, as him leste.
"Lordinges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
But tak it not, I prey yow, in desdeyn ;
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with your weye,
In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And hom-ward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventures that whylom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth him best of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this cas
Tales of best sentence and most solas,
Shal have a soper at our aller cost
Here in this place, sitting by this post,
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And for to make yow the more mery,
I wol my-selven gladly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owne cost, and be your gyde.
And who-so wol my jugement withseye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, with-outen wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."
This thing was graunted, and our othes swore
With ful glad herte, and preyden him also

Werken, Act. *Make it wys*, Discuss, deliberate.
Of best sentence, Of greatest wisdom.

That he wold vouche-saufe for to do so,
And that he wolde been our governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn prys ;
And we wold reuled been at his devys,
In heigh and lowe ; and thus, by oon assent,
We been accorded to his jugement.
And ther-up-on the wyn was fet anon ;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
With-outen any lenger taryinge.
A-morwe, whan that day bigan to springe,
Up roos our host, and was our aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre, alle in a flok,
And forth we riden, a litel more than pas,
Un-to the watering of seint Thomas.
And there our host bigan his hors areste,
And seyde : " Lordinges, herkneth, if yow leste.
Ye woot your forward, and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song acorde,
Lat see now who shal telle the firste tale.
As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
Who-so be rebel to my jugement
Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twinne ;
He which that hath the shortest shal biginne.
Sire knight," quod he, " my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
Cometh neer," quod he, " my lady prioresse ;
And ye, sir clerk, lat be your shamfastnesse,
Ne studieth noght ; ley hond to, every man."
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And shortly for to tellen, as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knight,
Of which ful blythe and glad was every wight ;

A-morwe, On the morrow.
Woot your forward, Know your agreement or covenant.
Or sort, or cas, Lot (or destiny) or chance.

And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By forward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd ; what nedeth wordes mo ?
And whan this gode man saugh it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his free assent,
He seyde : " Sin I shal beginne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name !
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."
And with that word we riden forth our weye ;
And he bigan with right a mery chere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

COMMENTARY

Much has been made of the fact that in this Prologue to his *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer (1340 ?–1400) paints a living picture of middle-class life in England in the fourteenth century. Nevertheless the Prologue is not only history but poetry, and poetry of the highest order.

Not merely because it is written in verse form or metre with a regular beat and end rhymes. A historian might conceivably put his record into verse, for even a famous scientist, Erasmus Darwin, put some of his theories into Chaucer's own iambic pentameters :

" You charmed, indulgent Sylphs ! their learnèd toil,
And crowned with fame your TORRICELL and BOYLE ;
Taught with sweet smiles, responsive to their prayer,
The spring and pressure of the viewless air.
How up exhausted tubes bright currents flow
Of liquid silver from the lake below,
Weigh the long column of th' incumbent skies,
And with the changeful moment fall and rise."

There is something more. Try to imagine yourself a historian who is only concerned with facts (ignoring emotion, feeling, and especially humour), and set down in prose the historical information which can be obtained from Chaucer's description, say, of the Prioress. Then try to discover what qualities of the description you have

left out. These omissions, taken together, make up the difference between poetry and history.

So much for the inner meaning and feeling of the memorable verses. In outward form they are no less famous. Here we have, in perfect order, the rhymed iambic pentameters in which so much of the finest English poetry was afterwards to be written, composed between five and six centuries ago, and almost as readable as lines by Goldsmith or Tennyson or Wordsworth. If we sound an occasional final *e* or *es* we can make almost every line scan perfectly. Whether Chaucer meant us to do this we cannot say. Perhaps he meant the rhythm to be broken here and there (as the rhythmic sound of the horses' feet on the Pilgrims' Way would be occasionally interrupted), lest his lines might become monotonous. No one can say with certainty. How one longs for a record of his voice.

As I write I hear a horse trotting along the asphalted roadway, and to my ears at least its hoofs beat out Chaucer's measure! Did he choose the line to suit the movement of his pilgrims?—a kind of "hippometer"!

As for the other qualities and characteristics of the lines, they can be discovered by affectionate browsing—the clearness of the descriptions and the revealing details, like the "mormal" on the cook's shin or the wart on the miller's nose; the simple epithets, *sweet* breath, *tender* crops, *young* sun; the equally simple similes and metaphors, so often drawn from Nature—"meek as is a maid," "embroidered as a meadow" (with daisies), eyes "grey as glass"; the occasional gentle satire—"he seemed busier than he was"; the jolly humour—the sailor rode his horse just "as he could"; and the gentleness of it all, with the writer's own modesty. The pleasaunce of English poetry could not have a gateway more delicately designed and wrought.

And remember, the poem is in your own mother tongue, though written at a time when English was considered only fit for use by the lower orders. Feeling is deeply stirred when Chaucer and his poetry are the subject of our meditations. Mrs. Browning writes: "Chaucer has sent us a train of pilgrims, each with a distinct individuality apart from their pilgrimage, all the way from Southwark and the Tabard Inn, to Canterbury and

Becket's shrine : and their laughter comes never to an end, and their talk goes on with the stars, and all the railroads which may intersect the spoilt earth for ever cannot hush the ' tramp, tramp ' of their horses' feet."

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

EDMUND SPENSER (1552 ?–1599)

(From *The Faerie Queene*, Book I., Canto xi.)

1

High time now gan it wex for *Vna* faire,
To thinke of those her captiue Parents deare,
And their forwasted kingdome to repaire :
Whereto whenas they now approchèd neare,
With hartie words her knight she gan to cheare,
And in her modest manner thus bespake ;
Deare knight, as deare, as euer knight was deare,
That all these sorrowes suffer for my sake,
High heauen behold the tedious toyle ye for me take.

2

Now are we come vnto my natiue soyle,
And to the place, where all our perils dwell ;
Here haunts that feend, and does his dayly spoyle,
Therefore henceforth be at your keeping well,
And euer ready for your foeman fell.
The sparke of noble courage now awake,
And striue your excellént selfe to excell ;
That shall ye euermore renowmed make,
Aboue all knights on earth, that batteill vndertake.

Gan it wex, It began to grow. *Forwasted*, Ravaged.
Approchèd neare. The Red Cross Knight and the Princess Una are on their way to the home of the latter, which had been wasted by the Dragon.
That shall ye. The antecedent to " that " is " selfe."

3

And pointing forth, lo yonder is (said she)
The brasen towre in which my parents deare
For dread of that huge feend emprisoned be,
Whom I from far see on the walles appeare,
Whose sight my feeble soule doth greatly cheare:
And on the top of all I do espye
The watchman wayting tydings glad to heare,
That O my parents might I happily
Vnto you bring, to ease you of your misery.

4

With that they heard a roaring hideous sound,
That all the ayre with terrour fillèd wide,
And seemd vneath to shake the stedfast ground.
Eftsoones that dreadfull Dragon they espide,
Where stretcht he lay vpon the sunny side
Of a great hill, himselfe like a great hill.
But all so soone, as he from far descride
Those glistring armes, that heauen with light did fill,
He rousd himselfe full blith, and hastned them vntill.

5

Then bad the knight his Lady yede aloofe,
And to an hill her selfe withdraw aside,
From whence she might behold that battailles proof
And eke be safe from daunger far descryde:
She him obayd, and turnd a little wyde.
Now O thou sacred Muse, most learned Dame,
Faire ympe of *Phœbus*, and his aged bride,
The Nourse of time, and euerlasting fame,
That warlike hands ennoblest with immortall name;

Vneath, Uneasily. *Yede*, Go. *Ympe*, Child, offspring.

6

O gently come into my feeble brest,
Come gently, but not with that mighty rage,
Wherewith the martiall troupes thou doest infest,
And harts of great Heroës doest enrage,
That nought their kindled courage may aswage,
Soone as thy dreadfull trompe begins to sownd ;
The God of warre with his fiers equipage
Thou doest awake, sleepe neuer he so sownd,
And scared nations doest with horrour sterne astownd.

7

By this the dreadfull Beast drew nigh to hand,
Halfe flying, and halfe footing in his hast,
That with his largenesse measurèd much land,
And made wide shadow vnder his huge wast ;
As mountaine doth the valley ouercast.
Approching nigh, he rearèd high afore
His body monstrous, horrible, and vast,
Which to increase his wondrous greatnesse more,
Was swolne with wrath, and poyson, and with bloudy gore.

8

And ouer all with brasen scales was armd,
Like plated coate of steele, so couchèd neare,
That nought mote perce, ne might his corse be harmd
With dint of sword, nor push of pointed speare ;
Which as an Eagle, seeing pray appeare,
His aery plumes doth rouze, full rudely dight,
So shakèd he, that horrour was to heare,
For as the clashing of an Armour bright,
Such noyse his rouzed scales did send vnto the knight.

Couchèd neare, Closely arranged or fitted.

9

His flaggy wings when forth he did display,
Were like two sayles, in which the hollow wynd
Is gathered full, and worketh speedy way:
And eke the pennes, that did his pineons bynd,
Were like mayne-yards, with flying canuas lynd,
With which whenas him list the ayre to beat,
And there by force vnwonted passage find,
The cloudes before him fled for terrour great,
And all the heauens stood still amazèd with his threat.

10

His huge long tayle wound vp in hundred foldes,
Does ouerspred his long bras-scaly backe,
Whose wreathèd boughts when euer he vnfoldes,
And thicke entangled knots adown does slacke,
Bespotted as with shields of red and blacke,
It sweepeth all the lan.3 behind him farre,
And of three furlongs does but litle lacke;
And at the point two stings in-fixed arre,
Both deadly sharpe, that sharpest steele exceeden farre.

11

But stings and sharpest steele did far exceed
The sharpnesse of his cruell rending clawes;
Dead was it sure, as sure as death in deed,
What euer thing does touch his rauenous pawes,
Or what within his reach he euer drawes.
But his most hideous head my toung to tell
Does tremble: for his deepe deuouring iawes
Wide gapèd, like the griesly mouth of hell,
Through which into his darke abisse all rauin fell.

Pennes, Feathers. *Boughts*, Coils.
Rauin, Prey, plunder

12

And that more wondrous was, in either iaw
Three ranckes of yron teeth enraungèd were,
In which yet trickling bloud and gobbets raw
Of late deuoured bodies did appeare,
That sight thereof bred cold congealèd feare :
Which to increase, and all atonce to kill,
A cloud of smothering smoke and sulphur seare
Out of his stinking gorge forth steemèd still,
That all the ayre about with smoke and stench did fill.

13

His blazing eyes, like two bright shining shields,
Did burne with wrath, and sparkled liuing fyre ;
As two broad Beacons, set in open fields,
Send forth their flames farre off to euery shyre,
And warning giue, that enemies conspyre,
With fire and sword the region to inuade ;
So flam'd his eyne with rage and rancorous yre :
But farre within, as in a hollow glade,
Those glaring lampes were set, that made a dreadfull shade.

14

So dreadfully he towards him did pas,
Forelifting vp aloft his speckled brest,
And often bounding on the brusèd gras,
As for great ioyance of his newcome guest.
Eftsoones he gan aduance his haughtie crest,
As chauffèd Bore his bristles doth vpreare,
And shoke his scales to battell readie drest ;
That made the Redcrosse knight nigh quake for feare,
As bidding bold defiance to his foeman neare.

Gobbets, Pieces. *Seare*, Burning.
Chauffèd, Enraged (chafed).

15

The knight gan fairely couch his steadie speare,
And fiercely ran at him with rigorous might :
The pointed steele arriuing rudely theare,
His harder hide would neither perce, nor bight,
But glauncing by forth passèd forward right ;
Yet sore amouèd with so puissant push,
The wrathfull beast about him turnèd light,
And him so rudely passing by, did brush
With his long tayle, that horse and man to ground did rush.

16

Both horse and man vp lightly rose againe,
And fresh encounter tówards him addrest :
But th' idle stroke yet backe recoyld in vaine,
And found no place his deadly point to rest.
Exceeding rage enflam'd the furious beast,
To be auengèd of so great despight ;
For neuer felt his imperceable brest
So wondrous force, from hand of liuing wight ;
Yet had he prou'd the powre of many a puissant knight.

17

Then with his wauing wings displayèd wyde,
Himselfe vp high he lifted from the ground,
And with strong flight did forcibly diuide
The yielding aire, which nigh too feeble found
Her flitting partes, and element vnsound,
To beare so great a weight : he, cutting way
With his broad sayles, about him soarèd round :
At last low stouping with vnweldie sway,
Snatcht vp both horse and man, to beare them quite away.

Wight, Man.

18

Long he them bore aboue the subiect plaine,
So farre as Ewghen bow a shaft may send,
Till struggling strong did him at last constraine,
To let them downe before his flightès end :
As hagard hauke presuming to contend
With hardie fowle, aboue his hable might,
His wearie pounces all in vaine doth spend,
To trusse the pray too heauie for his flight ;
Which comming downe to ground, does free it selfe by fight.

19

He so disseizèd of his gryping grosse,
The knight his thrillant speare againe assayd
In his bras-plated body to embosse,
And three mens strength vnto the stroke he layd ;
Wherewith the stiffe beame quakèd, as affrayd,
And glauncing from his scaly necke, did glyde
Close vnder his left wing, then broad displayd.
The percing steele there wrought a wound full wyde,
That with the vncouth smart the Monster lowdly cryde.

20

He cryde, as raging seas are wont to rore,
When wintry storme his wrathfull wreck does threat,
The rolling billowes beat the ragged shore,
As they the earth would shoulder from her seat,
And greedie gulfe does gape, as he would eat
His neighbour element in his reuenge :
Then gin the blustring brethren boldly threat,
To moue the world from off his stedfast henge,
And boystrous battell make, each other to auenge.

Ewghen, Yew.
Trusse, Seize and carry off.
Uncouth, Strange, unusual.
Hable, Powerful.
Thrillant, Penetrating.
Henge, Axis.

21

The steely head stucke fast still in his flesh,
Till with his cruell clawes he snatcht the wood,
And quite a sunder broke. Forth flowèd fresh
A gushing riuer of blacke goarie blood,
That drownèd all the land, whereon he stood ;
The streame thereof would driue a water-mill.
Trebly augmented was his furious mood
With bitter sense of his deepe rooted ill,
That flames of fire he threw forth from his large nose-thrill.

22

His hideous tayle then hurlèd he about,
And therewith all enwrapt the nimble thyes
Of his froth-fomy steed, whose courage stout
Striuing to loose the knot, that fast him tyes,
Himselfe in streighter bandes too rash implyes,
That to the ground he is perforce constraynd
To throw his rider : who can quickly ryse
From off the earth, with durty bloud distaynd,
For that reprochfull fall right fowly he disdaynd.

23

And fiercely tooke his trenchand blade in hand,
With which he stroke so furious and so fell,
That nothing seemd the puissance could withstand :
Vpon his crest the hardned yron fell,
But his more hardned crest was armd so well,
That deeper dint therein it would not make ;
Yet so extremely did the buffe him quell,
That from henceforth he shund the like to take,
But when he saw them come, he did them still forsake.

Nose-thrill, Nostril.
Buffe, Blow, buffet.
Trenchand, Sharp, piercing.
Still, Continually.

24

The knight was wrath to see his stroke beguyld,
And smote againe with more outrageous might ;
But backe againe the sparckling steele recoyled,
And left not any marke, where it did light ;
As if in Adamant rocke it had bene pight.
The beast impatient of his smarting wound,
And of so fierce and forcible despight,
Thought with his wings to stye aboue the ground ;
But his late wounded wing vnseruiceable found.

25

Then full of griefe and anguish vehement,
He lowdly brayd, that like was neuer heard,
And from his wide deuouring ouen sent
A flake of fire, that flashing in his beard,
Him all amazd, and almost made affeard :
The scorching flame sore swinged all his face,
And through his armour all his bodie seard,
That he could not endure so cruell cace,
But thought his armes to leaue, and helmet to vnlace.

26

Not that great Champion of the antique world,
Whom famous Poetes verse so much doth vaunt,
And hath for twelue huge labours high extold,
So many furies and sharpe fits did haunt,
When him the poysoned garment did enchaunt
With *Centaures* bloud, and bloudie verses charm'd,
As did this knight twelue thousand dolours daunt,
Whom fyrie steele now burns that earst him arm'd,
That erst him goodly arm'd, now most of all him harm'd.

Pight, Placed.
In his beard, i.e. The knight's.
Stye, Ascend.
Champion, Hercules.

27

Faint, wearie, sore, emboylèd, grieuèd, brent
With heat, toyle, wounds, armes, smart, and inward fire
That neuer man such mischiefes did torment ;
Death better were, death did he oft desire,
But death will neuer come, when needes require.
Whom so dismayd when that his foe beheld,
He cast to suffer him no more respire,
But gan his sturdie sterne about to weld,
And him so strongly stroke, that to the ground him feld.

28

It fortunèd (as faire it then befell)
Behind his backe, vnweeting where he stood,
Of auncient time there was a springing well,
From which fast trickled forth a siluer flood,
Full of great vertues, and for med'cine good.
Whylome, before that cursèd Dragon got
That happie land, and all with innocent blood
Defyld those sacred waues, it rightly hot
The well of life, ne yet his vertues had forgot.

29

For vnto life the dead it could restore,
And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away,
Those that with sicknesse were infect'd sore,
It could recure, and aged long decay
Renew, as one were borne that very day.
Both *Silo* this, and *Iordan* did excell,
And th' English *Bath*, and eke the german *Spau*,
Ne can *Cephise*, nor *Hebrus* match this well :
Into the same the knight backe ouerthrowen, fell.

Emboylèd, Agitated, worked up to boiling point.
Respire, Breathe.
Hot, Was called.

30

Now gan the golden *Phœbus* for to steepe
His fierie face in billowes of the west,
And his faint steedes watred in Ocean deepe,
Whiles from their iournall labours they did rest,
When that infernall Monster, hauing kest
His wearie foe into that liuing well,
Can high aduance his broad discoloured brest,
Aboue his wonted pitch, with countenance fell,
And clapt his yron wings, as victor he did dwell.

31

Which when his pensiue Ladie saw from farre,
Great woe and sorrow did her soule assay,
As weening that the sad end of the warre,
And gan to highest God entirely pray,
That feaređ chance from her to turne away ;
With folded hands and knees full lowly bent
All night she watcht, ne once adowne would lay
Her daintie limbs in her sad dreriment,
But praying still did wake, and waking did lament.

32

The morrow next gan early to appeare,
That *Titan* rose to runne his daily race ;
But early ere the morrow next gan reare
Out of the sea faire *Titans* deawy face,
Vp rose the gentle virgin from her place,
And lookèd all about, if she might spy
Her louèd knight to moue his manly pace :
For she had great doubt of his safety,
Since late she saw him fall before his enemy.

Iournal, Diurnal, daily. *Kest*, Cast.
Chance, Misfortune.

33

At last she saw, where he vpstarted braue
Out of the well, wherein he drenchèd lay ;
As Eagle fresh out of the Ocean waue,
Where he hath left his plumes all hoary grey,
And deckt himselfe with feathers youthly gay,
Like Eyas hauke vp mounts vnto the skies,
His newly budded pineons to assay,
And marueiles at himselfe, still as he flies :
So new this new-borne knight to battell new did rise.

34

Whom when the damnèd feend so fresh did spy,
No wonder if he wondred at the sight,
And doubted, whether his late enemy
It were, or other new supplièd knight.
He, now to proue his late renewèd might,
High brandishing his bright deaw-burning blade,
Vpon his crested scalpe so sore did smite,
That to the scull a yawning wound it made :
The deadly dint his dullèd senses all dismaid.

35

I wote not, whether the reuenging steele
Were hardned with that holy water dew,
Wherein he fell, or sharper edge did feele,
Or his baptizèd hands now greater grew ;
Or other secret vertue did ensew ;
Else neuer could the force of fleshly arme,
Ne molten mettall in his bloud embrew :
For till that stownd could neuer wight him harme,
By subtilty, nor slight, nor might, nor mighty charme.

Eyas hauke, A young, newly-fledged hawk.
Stownd, Stroke, blow.

36

The cruell wound enragèd him so sore,
That loud he yellèd for exceeding paine ;
As hundred ramping Lyons seem'd to rore,
Whom rauenous hunger did thereto constraine :
Then gan he tosse aloft his stretchèd traine,
And therewith scourge the buxome aire so sore,
That to his force to yeelden it was faine ;
He ought his sturdie strokes might stand afore,
That high trees ouerthrew, and rocks in peeces tore.

37

The same aduancing high aboue his head,
With sharpe intended sting so rude him smot,
That to the earth him droue, as stricken dead,
Ne liuing wight would haue him life behot :
The mortall sting his angry needle shot
Quite through his shield, and in his shoulder seasd,
Where fast it stucke, ne would there out be got :
The griefe thereof him wondrous sore diseasd,
Ne might his ranckling paine with patience be appeasd.

38

But yet more mindfull of his honour deare,
Then of the grieuous smart, which him did wring,
From loathèd soile he can him lightly reare,
And stroue to loose the farre infixèd sting :
Which when in vaine he tryde with struggèling,
Inflam'd with wrath, his raging blade he heft,
And strooke so strongly, that the knotty string
Of his huge taile he quite a sunder cleft,
Fiue ioynts thereof he hewd, and but the stump him left.

Buxome, Yielding, unresisting. *Ought*, Anything.
Haue him life behot, Hold out hope of life to him.
Diseasd, Made uneasy.

39

Hart cannot thinke, what outrage, and what cryes,
With foule enfouldred smoake and flashing fire,
The hell-bred beast threw forth vnto the skyes,
That all was couerèd with darknesse dire :
Then fraught with rancour, and engorgèd ire,
He cast at once him to auenge for all,
And gathering vp himselfe out of the mire,
With his vneuen wings did fiercely fall
Vpon his sunne-bright shield, and gript it fast withall.

40

Much was the man encombred with his hold,
In feare to lose his weapon in his paw,
Ne wist yet, how his talants to vnfold ;
Nor harder was from *Cerberus* greedie iaw
To plucke a bone, then from his cruell claw
To reaue by strength the gripèd gage away :
Thrise he assayd it from his foot to draw,
And thrise in vaine to draw it did assay,
It booted nought to thinke, to robbe him of his pray.

41

Tho when he saw no power might preuaile,
His trustie sword he cald to his last aid,
Wherewith he fiercely did his foe assaile,
And double blowes about him stoutly laid,
That glauncing fire out of the yron plaid ;
As sparckles from the Anduile vse to fly,
When heauie hammers on the wedge are swaid ;
Therewith at last he forst him to vnty
One of his grasping feete, him to defend thereby.

Talants, Talons.
Cerberus, The three-headed dog that guarded the gate of Hell.
Reaue, Release. *Gage*, Pledge.

42

The other foot, fast fixèd on his shield,
Whenas no strength nor stroks mote him constraine
To loose, ne yet the warlike pledge to yield,
He smot thereat with all his might and maine,
That nought so wondrous puissance might sustaine;
Vpon the ioynt the lucky steele did light,
And made such way, that hewd it quite in twaine;
The paw yet missèd not his minisht might,
But hong still on the shield, as it at first was pight.

43

For griefe thereof, and diuelish despight,
From his infernall fournace forth he threw
Huge flames, that dimmèd all the heauens light,
Enrold in duskish smoke and brimstone blew;
As burning *Aetna* from his boyling stew
Doth belch out flames, and rockes in peeces broke,
And ragged ribs of mountaines molten new,
Enwrapt in coleblacke clouds and filthy smoke,
That all the land with stench, and heauen with horror choke.

44

The heate whereof, and harmefull pestilence
So sore him noyd, that forst him to retire
A little backward for his best defence,
To saue his bodie from the scorching fire,
Which he from hellish entrailes did expire.
It chaunst (eternall God that chaunce did guide)
As he recoylèd backward, in the mire
His nigh forwearied feeble feet did slide,
And downe he fell, with dread of shame sore terrifide.

Expire, Breathe out.

45

There grew a goodly tree him faire beside,
Loaden with fruit and apples rosie red,
As they in pure vermilion had beene dide,
Whereof great vertues ouer all were red :
For happie life to all, which thereon fed,
And life eke euerlasting did befall :
Great God it planted in that blessed sted
With his almightie hand, and did it call
The tree of life, the crime of our first fathers fall.

46

In all the world like was not to be found,
Saue in that soile, where all good things did grow,
And freely sprong out of the fruitfull ground,
As incorrupted Nature did them sow,
Till that dread Dragon all did ouerthrow.
Another like faire tree eke grew thereby,
Whereof who so did eat, eftsoones did know
Both good and ill : O mornefull memory,
That tree through one mans fault hath doen vs all to dy.

47

From that first tree forth flowd, as from a well,
A trickling streame of Balme, most soueraine
And daintie deare, which on the ground still fell,
And ouerflowèd all the fertill plaine,
As it had deawèd bene with timely raine :
Life and long health that gratious ointment gaue,
And deadly woundes could heale, and reare againe
The senselesse corse appointed for the graue.
Into that same he fell : which did from death him saue.

Red, Told.
Crime, Criminal cause.
Soueraine, Powerful.
Sted, Place.
Doen, Caused.
Still, Continually.

48

For nigh thereto the euer damnèd beast
Durst not approch, for he was deadly made,
And all that life preseruèd, did detest :
Yet he it oft aduentur'd to inuade.
By this the drouping day-light gan to fade,
And yeeld his roome to sad succeeding night,
Who with her sable mantle gan to shade
The face of earth, and wayes of liuing wight,
And high her burning torch set vp in heauen bright.

49

When gentle *Vna* saw the second fall
Of her deare knight, who wearie of long fight,
And faint through losse of bloud, mou'd not at all,
But lay as in a dreame of deepe delight,
Besmeard with pretious Balme, whose vertuous might
Did heale his wounds, and scorching heat alay,
Againe she stricken was with sore affright,
And for his safetie gan deuoutly pray ;
And watch the noyous night, and wait for ioyous day.

50

The ioyous day gan early to appeare,
And faire *Aurora* from the deawy bed
Of aged *Tithone* gan her selfe to reare,
With rosie cheekes, for shame as blushing red ;
Her golden lockes for haste were loosely shed
About her eares, when *Vna* her did marke
Clymbe to her charet, all with flowers spred,
From heauen high to chase the chearelesse darke ;
With merry note her loud salutes the mounting larke.

Noyous, Harmful.

51

Then freshly vp arose the doughtie knight,
All healèd of his hurts and woundès wide,
And did himselfe to battell readie dight ;
Whose early foe awaiting him beside
To haue deuourd, so soone as day he spyde,
When now he saw himselfe so freshly reare,
As if late fight had nought him damnifyde,
He woxe dismayd, and gan his fate to feare ;
Nathlesse with wonted rage he him aduancèd neare.

52

And in his first encounter, gaping wide,
He thought attonce him to haue swallowd quight,
And rusht vpon him with outragious pride ;
Who him r'encountring fierce, as hauke in flight,
Perforce rebutted backe. The weapon bright
Taking aduantage of his open iaw,
Ran through his mouth with so importune might,
That deepe emperst his darksome hollow maw,
And back retyrd, his life bloud forth with all did draw.

53

So downe he fell, and forth his life did breath,
That vanisht into smoke and cloudès swift ;
So downe he fell, that th' earth him vnderneath
Did grone, as feeble so great load to lift ;
So downe he fell, as an huge rockie clift,
Whose false foundation waues haue washt away,
With dreadfull poyse is from the mayneland rift,
And rolling downe, great *Neptune* doth dismay ;
So downe he fell, and like an heapèd mountaine lay.

Dight, Prepared. *Poyse*, Force.

54

The knight himselfe euen trembled at his fall,
So huge and horrible a masse it seem'd ;
And his deare Ladie, that beheld it all,
Durst not approch for dread, which she misdeem'd,
But yet at last, when as the direfull feend
She saw not stirre, off-shaking vaine affright,
She nigher drew, and saw that ioyous end :
Then God she praysd, and thankt her faithfull knight,
That had atchieu'd so great a conquest by his might.

COMMENTARY

The poet is here the perfect story-teller, purely objective and self-effacing. He has a high theme, the battle between Good and Evil, which he cannot stage elsewhere than in Eden, while he imitates the epic poets like Homer by giving supernatural aid to his hero.

His descriptive power is great. Read again the description of the Fiend in stanza 7 and onward, and note how horror is piled on horror to impress the reader with the mightiness of the task the Red Cross Knight had undertaken, not without fear—an effective human touch which serves to heighten his bravery. Note the sounding epithets (some of them unusual and arresting, such as *hollow* wynd, *subject* plaine, *thrillant* spear), and especially the description of the storm in stanza 20 and the account of the final fall of the Dragon, with its effective fourfold repetition of " So downe he fell."

Here are weaknesses.—Study the latter part of stanza 26 ; find the incongruous line in stanza 29 ; ponder the last two lines of stanza 32 ; and having reread stanza 27 and onward, say what happened to the end of the dragon's tail. A descriptive poet who enters into details ought to be able to account for all the spare parts !

You will find it difficult to imitate this stanza. As you will see later (p. 151), Robert Burns tried it with modified

success. In any case, avoid archaisms. Try to describe the story of the Fall of Man as given in Genesis, using this Spenserian stanza, with its long concluding line known as an Alexandrine and its rigid rhyming.

ODE ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

JOHN MILTON (1608–1674).

I

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid and Virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring ;
For so the holy sages once did sing :
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside ; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

III

Say, heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God ?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode
Now while the Heav'n by the sun's team untrod

Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright ?

IV

See now from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet ;
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessèd feet ;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel choir,
From out his secret altar touched with hallow'd fire.

The Hymn

I

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies ;
Nature in awe to him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize :
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair
She wooes the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw :
Confounded that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

Prevent, Go before. *She*, Nature.
Pollute, Polluted.

III

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace ;
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing ;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV

No war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around :
The idle spear and shield were high up hung,
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood ;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng ;
And kings sate still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sov'reign Lord was by.

V

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began :
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,

Turning sphere. In the Ptolemaic system the earth was the centre round which the heavens, with their stars, revolved. *Sphere* here means this great revolving framework. There were eight of these spheres, carrying respectively the sun, the moon, the five planets and the fixed stars. On each sphere a siren sat singing, and their light tones made the "harmony of the spheres." (See first line of stanza xiii. following.)

Ready harbinger, God's willing (or swift) messenger.

Turtle, Turtle-dove, the bird of peace. *Armèd,* Full of awe.

Whist, Hushed.

Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

VI

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
  Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
  Or Lucifer that often warned them thence ;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

VII

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
  The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
  The new-enlightened world no more should need ;
He saw a greater sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axle-tree could bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
  Sate simply chatting in a rustic row ;
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan
  Was kindly come to live with them below ;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

Birds of calm, Halcyons. There was an ancient belief that during the seven days preceding and the seven succeeding the shortest day of the year, at which time the halcyon was breeding, a great tranquillity prevailed at sea.

Influence, Rays or shafts of light.

IX

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took ;
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

X

Nature that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling ;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced night arrayed ;
The helmèd Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn choir,
With unexpressive notes to Heaven's new-born Heir.

XII

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made
But when of old the sons of Morning sung,

Sons of Morning. See Job xxxviii. 4–7.

While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
(If ye have power to touch our senses so) ;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow ;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full concert to th' angelic symphony.

XIV

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould ;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow ; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering ;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

Like, Similar.

XVI

But wisest Fate says No,
This must not yet be so;
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorify;
Yet first to those ychained in sleep
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep

XVII

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smould'ring clouds out brake:
The agèd earth, aghast,
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake;
When at the world's last session
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for, from this happy day,
Th' old Dragon under ground
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.

No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament ;
From haunted spring and dale
Edged with poplar pale
The parting Genius is with sighing sent ;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint ;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint ;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power forgoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine ;
And moonèd Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine ;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn ;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn ;

Lars and Lemures, The Roman gods of hearth and home.
Flamens, Roman priests.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis hast.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshow'red grass with lowings loud;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain with timbrelled anthems dark
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

XXV

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand;
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn:
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnèd crew.

XXVI

So, when the sun in bed
Curtained with cloudy red

Damnèd, Condemned or fated to be overcome.

Pillows his chin upon an orient wave.
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th' infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave ;
And the yellow-skirted Fayes
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

XXVII

But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest,
Time is our tedious song should here have ending ;
Heaven's youngest teemèd star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending ;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

COMMENTARY

This poem is described as an Ode, which may be defined as a lyrical or song poem of a stately and elaborate character which deals with some dignified or exalted theme, with careful attention to form and language. An English ode which follows the method of Pindar, and is therefore styled Pindaric, is divided into three kinds of stanzas, known as strophe, antistrophe, and epode—one of the best known being *The Bard*, by Thomas Gray. Other odes, such as Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, are more simple in structure, consisting of regular stanzas; but there are many English poems classed under this heading which are very varied in form. The present Ode contains two types of stanza, with variations in length of line and rather elaborate rhyming. There is no mistaking the musical character of the poem nor the dignity and loftiness of its theme.

The first part of the poem may be described as the Invocation, and this is followed by the Hymn. The argu-

Infernal, Literally, belonging to the lower regions.

ment should be written out, when it will be found that the poem is wonderfully compact and unified in theme, without any digressions or asides. It is descriptive and highly pictorial, which, according to the definitions, a lyrical poem ought not to be, which shows how little an inspired poet is confined by definitions.

John Milton (1608–1674) wrote this poem at the age of twenty-one, and a careful reader can deduce from it the nature of his early environment and education; his strict upbringing by a father of strong religious convictions, his careful training in classical and historical learning (at St. Paul's School and Cambridge), and his deep knowledge of the Bible and of such science as his age was able to command. It is a poem which might be expected from the poet who was later to write *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*; the wonder is that it is the work of an accomplished poet rather than of an apprentice with few, if any, indications of youthfulness.

Professor Saintsbury gives in the following opinion a hint for a line of inquiry with regard to the sound of this poem, which ought of course to be read aloud: "Nowhere, even in Milton, does the mastery of harmonies appear better than in the exquisite rhythmical arrangement of the piece, in the almost unearthly beauty of the exordium, and in the famous stanzas beginning 'The oracles are dumb.'" Compare the structure of the stanza used in the Invocation with that of the Spenserian stanza (see p. 38).

Study next the beautiful and unusual structure of the stanza employed in the Hymn. Similes, metaphors, and epithets are all worthy of close attention, while it is interesting to test the opinion of a critic who writes: "The learning displayed shows that Milton was the poet of the study rather than of the market-place or field." Compare also stanzas viii. to xiv. of the Hymn with St. Luke ii. 8–14.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637; and by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier

A learned friend. Edward King, the friend of Milton, the son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland under Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. On his voyage to Ireland his ship struck on a rock on the English coast, and he perished in the sea. He was distinguished for his piety and talents, was a fellow of Christ Church, Cambridge, and was contemporary with Milton at the University.

Yet once more. This poem was written in 1637, about three years after the performance of *Comus*.

Laurels, The poet's reward.

Myrtles. At a Greek banquet a myrtle bough was held over the head of each guest as he sang in his turn.

Ivy, Sacred to Bacchus, the god of wine.

Bitter constraint. It would seem, from these opening lines, that Milton had previously formed a resolution to write no more poetry for the present—to write no more till he thought himself better fitted to do so; but "bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear" made him break that resolution. Probably, the last piece he had produced was *Comus*.

Season due, The time when his preparation was complete and he would begin to write again.

Lycidas. The original Lycidas was a shepherd who appears in one of the *Eclogues* of Virgil.

Build the lofty rhyme. Only Latin poems by King are extant.

Unwept, and welter to the parching wind
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin then, Sisters of the Sacred Well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse ;
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn,
And, as he passes, turn
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud ;
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill ;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove a field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Towards Heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute,
Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damætas loved to hear our song.
But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return !
Thee, shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown
And all their echoes mourn.
The willows and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

Sisters of the Sacred Well, The Nine Muses who dwell on Mount Helicon, whence two streams flowed.
Sable shroud, Coffin.
Battening, Feeding.
Damætas, probably a reference to a tutor of Christ's College, Cambridge.

As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear
When first the white thorn blows :
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas ?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
Ay me ! I fondly dream !
Had ye been there—for what could that have done ?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?
Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"

Wardrobe, Dress.
Steep, Probably of Penmaenmawr in Denbighshire.
Mona, Anglesey. *Deva*, River Dee.
The rout. Orpheus was slain by the Thracian maidens, excited by the revels of Bacchus.
Blind Fury, Atropos, one of the Fates who cut the thread of life.

Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears ;
" Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to th' world, nor in broad Rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."
O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood ;
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea.
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain ?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beakèd promontory ;
They knew not of his story,
And sage Hippotades their answer brings :
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark
Built in th' eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Arethuse, A fountain in Syracuse, near which the Greek poet Theocritus was born. He wrote much of shepherds.

Mincius, A river of Venetia near which Virgil was born. This poet also wrote of country life in his *Eclogues*.

Oat, The reed made of oaten straw. It is not clear how it could sound and listen !

The herald of the sea, Triton, who blew with a shell to arouse or allay the sea.

Hippotades, Æolus, the god of the winds.

The air was calm. Milton was of opinion that the vessel in which King sailed was unseaworthy.

Panope, A sea-goddess to whom sailors prayed in storms.

Th' eclipse. Eclipses were believed, both by the ancients and in later ages, to be times of evil omen, and to bring a curse upon everything done during them.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy and his bonnet sedge
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
Ah ! who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge ?
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake ;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain) ;
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :
How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Anow of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold ?
Of other care they little reck'ning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest ;
Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learned ought else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !
What recks it them ? What need they ? they are sped ;
And when they list their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw ;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said ;

Camus, The river Cam personified.
Sanguine flower, The hyacinth, said to have sprung from the blood of the youth Hyacinth accidentally slain by Apollo.
The pilot, St. Peter.
Such as, The bishops of the Church of England, whom Milton blames for the abuses of the time.
Blind mouths. They were appointed as overseers (Greek *episkopos*) but see nothing ; as shepherds or feeders, but act only as mouths—that is, eaters.
Scrannel, Screeching.
Grim wolf, The Roman Catholic body.

But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.
Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flow'rets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears.
Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For, so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me ! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas

Two-handed engine. Perhaps the two Houses of Parliament, which in 1640 began to reform certain abuses in the Church. Lycidas appears to have been forgotten for the moment. But the meaning of the passage is not clear.

Alpheus. The river god who loved Arethusa and pursued her, whereupon she was changed by Diana into the fountain already referred to, the waters of which then mingled with the stream. Read Shelley's *Arethusa.*

Sicilian muse, The poet Theocritus, whose Idylls tell of Sicilian shepherds and their loves.

Swart star, Sirius or Canicula, a star just in the mouth of the constellation Canis (Orion's dog). It rose at Athens about the time of the greatest heat, and was therefore supposed to cause that heat.

Rathe, Early.

Crow-toe, Ranunculus.

Amaranthus, A plant with a flower of flaming red with which " the spirits elect bind their resplendent locks."

Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps, under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
Or whether thou to our moist vows denied
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold ;
Look homeward, angel, now, and melt with ruth ;
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.
Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills,

Monstrous world, The world of monsters.
Bellerus, A Cornish giant. (Compare *Bellerium* (Land's End).)
Guarded mount. Mount St. Michael, the Cornish island which faces Namancos and the hold (castle) of Bayona on the Spanish coast, were said to be the scene of an appearance of the Archangel Michael.
Uncouth, Unskilled.

While the still morn went out with sandals grey,
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay ;
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropped into the western bay ;
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

COMMENTARY

Milton calls this poem a " monody," which the dictionary defines as (1) an ode sung by a single actor in Greek tragedy ; (2) a poem in which a mourner bewails some one's death. It is also classified as an " elegy," which means in modern literature a mournful or very grave poem, most often, but not always, a lament for the dead, whether a dead person, or a dead love, or other intangible loss.

There is no English verse pattern which can be labelled as an elegy, as *e.g.* a sonnet can be labelled at sight, and the various poems under this heading are of many forms. Milton's *Lycidas* is of very irregular construction and metre. It consists of nine portions of unequal length. Most of the lines are iambic pentameters, a metre well suited to the slow movement which suits reflective sadness, but there are frequent trimeters occurring at irregular intervals. Rhyme is present, but not so regular as to be obtrusive. By this flexibility of structure the poet leaves free (1) the ear of the reader, which he enchants with musical phrase and a rhythm independent of formal scansion ; (2) the mind of the reader to attend to the ideas and sentiments of the poem. The poem is sad and plaintive, but by its metrical and rhythmic construction is not allowed to become whining or drowsy.

Try to set down the argument of the poem. What is your feeling about St. Peter scolding the bishops of the day ? Do you consider that the saint is dragged in for political purposes ? Note that when Ruskin wished to

Doric, The Greek dialect used by the Pastoral poets.

show how real reading of literature should be done, he chose these lines about " blind mouths " for his exposition. (See *Sesame and Lilies* ("Of King's Treasuries").)

In what sense could *Lycidas* be described as a " pastoral " poem ? Is the death of Edward King really the theme of the poem ? If not, what is the theme ?

ALEXANDER'S FEAST; OR, THE POWER OF MUSIC

An Ode in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day (1697).

JOHN DRYDEN (1631–1700).

I

'Twas at the royal feast, for *Persia* won,
By *Philip's* warlike son :
Aloft in awful state
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne ;
His valiant peers were placed around ;
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound.
(So should desert in arms be crowned :)
The lovely *Thais* by his side,
Sate like a blooming *Eastern* bride
In flow'r of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair !
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

For Persia won, For the winning or conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon.

Thais, An Athenian woman of great beauty and loose morals.

CHORUS

Happy, happy, happy pair !
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

II

Timotheus placed on high
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touched the lyre :
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heav'nly joys inspire.
The song began from *Jove* ;
Who left his blissful seats above
(Such is the pow'r of mighty love).
A dragon's fiery form belied the god :
Sublime on radiant spires he rode,
When he to fair *Olympia* pressed :
And while he sought her snowy breast :
Then, round her slender waist he curled,
And stamped an image of himself, a sovereign of the world.
The list'ning crowd admire the lofty sound,
A present deity, they shout around :
A present deity, the vaulted roofs rebound.
With ravished ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

Timotheus, A gifted musician of Thebes.
Belied, Disguised. *And while*, Meanwhile.
A Sovereign of the World. This wild story of the origin of Alexander seems to have been invented to please and flatter the conqueror, and successfully enough ! Romance has almost entirely obscured history in connection with great military conquerors ; and moreover, the wine was flowing, as we are reminded in the first line of stanza iii.

CHORUS

With ravished ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

III

The praise of *Bacchus* then the sweet musician sung,
Of *Bacchus* ever fair, and ever young :
The jolly god in triumph comes ;
Sound the trumpets ; beat the drums ;
Flushed with a purple grace
He shows his honest face :
Now give the hautboys breath ; he comes, he comes.
Bacchus ever fair and young
Drinking joys did first ordain ;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure ;
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure ;
Rich the treasure ;
Sweet the pleasure ;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

CHORUS

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure ;
Rich the treasure
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

Bacchus, The god of wine and revelry.
Hautboys, Wind instruments somewhat like flutes, which emitted a high, piercing note in keeping with the sentiment and emotion of this part of the poem.

IV

Soothed with the sound the king grew vain ;
Fought all his battles o'er again ;
And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew
the slain.
The Master saw the madness rise,
His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes ;
And while he heav'n and earth defied,
Changed his hand, and checked his pride.
He chose a mournful muse,
Soft pity to infuse ;
He sung *Darius* great and good,
By too severe a fate,
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
Fallen from his high estate,
And weltering in his blood :
Deserted at his utmost need
By those his former bounty fed ;
On the bare earth exposed he lies,
With not a friend to close his eyes.
With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
Revolving in his altered soul
The various turns of chance below ;
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

CHORUS

Revolving in his altered soul
The various turns of chance below ;
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

Master, The musician. Note the fitness of the term ; he it is who is in control, even of Persia's conqueror.
Darius, The defeated King of Persia.

V

The mighty Master smiled to see
That love was in the next degree ;
'Twas but a kindred sound to move,
For pity melts the mind to love.
Softly sweet, in *Lydian* measures,
Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble ;
Honour but an empty bubble ;
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying.
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, O think, it worth enjoying.
Lovely *Thais* sits beside thee,
Take the good the gods provide thee.
The many rend the skies, with loud applause ;
So love was crowned, but music won the cause.
The Prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,
Sighed and looked, and sighed again :
At length, with love and wine at once oppressed,
The vanquished victor sunk upon her breast.

CHORUS

The Prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,
Sighed and looked, and sighed again :
At length, with love and wine at once oppressed,
The vanquished victor sunk upon her breast.

In the next degree, The next subject for his treatment.
Kindred sound, Akin to that emotion just aroused for Darius.

VI

Now strike the golden lyre again ;
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark, the horrid sound
Has raisèd up his head ;
As awaked from the dead,
And amazed, he stares around.
Revenge, revenge, *Timotheus* cries,
See the furies arise !
See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes !
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand !
Those are *Grecian* ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain :
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the *Persian* abodes,
And glitt'ring temples of their hostile gods.
The princes applaud with a furious joy ;
And the King seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy ;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another *Helen*, fired another *Troy*.

CHORUS

And the King seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy ;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another *Helen*, fired another Troy.

Thais led the way. It is said that the woman incited Alexander to fire the Persian city of Persepolis.

VII

Thus long ago,
Ere heaving bellows learned to blow,
While organs yet were mute,
Timotheus, to his breathing flute
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.
At last divine *Cecilia* came,
Inventress of the vocal frame ;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old *Timotheus* yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown :
He raised a mortal to the skies ;
She drew an angel down.

GRAND CHORUS

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame ;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old *Timotheus* yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown :
He raised a mortal to the skies ;
She drew an angel down.

COMMENTARY

The theme of the poem is slight enough ; it is chiefly noteworthy for its *form*. It is described as an Ode (see

Divine Cecilia, The patron saint of musicians and inventress of the organ.

p. 66), but it differs entirely from the Nativity Ode already considered. There is no regularity in the stanzas or the choruses, nor yet in the metre or the arrangement of the rhymes. But these sudden changes are planned with finished art to suggest changes in emotion and exhibit their effects. The language, too, is carefully chosen to convey sense by sound, as can best be tested by reading the poem aloud with meticulous care. Consider the following :

> "All metre is rhythm. But the rhythm of a metre maintained on the beat of a regular pattern is poor, monotonous, and wearisome. With bad writers metre may be said to be a cheap substitute for rhythm.
>
> "'Speech-rhythm,' says Mr. Bridges, 'is infinite. When words are merely strung together so as to fit into a poetic metre, much more of the possible beauty of rhythmic speech is sacrificed than can be gained by the rhyme and prescribed cadences that please a common ear.' We cannot but agree. But does not this seem to justify those who would discard metre ? Does it not seem to follow that a poem should find its ideal form not in metre —a system of selected rhythms—but in speech-rhythms varied to suit every subtle change of mood." *

Now consider this point. In the above poem Dryden adheres to metre—any single line can be scanned in the *tum-ti-tum-ti-tum* manner—but the feelings he arouses force the reader to use speech-rhythms, stressing according to the sense : not—

> At last | divine | Cecil | ia came

but rather

> At last divine Cecilia came.

Study the poem afresh, reading it with speech-rhythm.

* From *Tradition and Reaction in Modern Poetry*, by Laurence Binyon. English Association Pamphlet No. 63.

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

An Heroi-Comical Poem

ALEXANDER POPE (1688–1744)

CANTO I

WHAT dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to Caryl, Muse ! is due :
This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view :
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess ! could compel
A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle ?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord ?
In tasks so bold can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage ?

Sol through white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day :
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake :
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,

Caryl. Mr. Cary, a gentleman who was secretary to Queen Mary, wife of James II., whose fortunes he followed into France, author of the comedy of *Sir Solomon Single*, originally proposed the subject to him in a view of putting an end, by this piece of ridicule, to a quarrel that was risen between two noble families, those of Lord Petre and of Miss Arabella Fermor, on the trifling occasion of his having cut off a lock of her hair. The author sent it to the lady, with whom he was acquainted ; and she took it so well as to give about copies of it. That first sketch was written in less than a fortnight, in 1711, in two cantos only, and it was so printed. But it was received so well that he made it more considerable the next year by the addition of the machinery of the sylphs, and extended it to five cantos. This insertion he always esteemed, and justly, the greatest effort of his skill and art as a poet.

And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
Her guardian sylph prolonged the balmy rest :
'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed
The morning-dream that hovered o'er her head ;
A youth more glitt'ring than a birth-night beau,
(That even in slumber caused her cheek to glow)
Seemed to her ear his winning lips to lay,
And thus in whispers said, or seemed to say,—
" Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care
Of thousand bright inhabitants of air !
If e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,
Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught ;
Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,
The silver token, and the circled green,
Or virgins visited by angel-powers,
With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flowers ;
Hear and believe ! thy own importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
Some secret truths, from learnèd pride concealed,
To maids alone and children are revealed :
What though no credit doubting wits may give ?
The fair and innocent shall still believe.
Know then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,
The light militia of the lower sky :
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o'er the box, and hover round the ring.

Pressed watch, A watch known as a "repeater," which when pressed told the hour.

Sylph. In a letter to Mrs. Fermor herself Pope explains that "the four elements (Earth, Air, Fire, and Water) are inhabited by spirits, which certain philosophers call sylphs, gnomes, nymphs, and salamanders. The gnomes or dæmons of earth delight in mischief ; but the sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best-conditioned creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true adepts, an inviolate preservation of chastity."

Silver token, The sixpence left in the shoe for the good fairies who did the housewife's work over-night.

Ring, The place where horse exercise was taken.

Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once inclosed in woman's beauteous mould ;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
That all her vanities at once are dead ;
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of ombre, after death survive.
For when the fair in all their pride expire,
To their first elements their souls retire :
The sprites of fiery termagants in flame
Mount up, and take a salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip, with nymphs, their elemental tea.
The graver prude sinks downward to a gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
The light coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.
" Know further yet ; whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embraced :
For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
What guards the purity of melting maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires ?
'Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,
Though honour is the word with men below.
" Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,

Ombre, The favourite ladies' card game of Queen Anne's time ; it came originally from Spain.
Tea. Evidently pronounced *tay* in Pope's time.

For life predestined to the gnomes' embrace.
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdained, and love denied :
Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And Garters, Stars, and coronets appear,
And in soft sounds, your Grace salutes their ear.
'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,
Teach infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a beau.
" Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall
To one man's treat, but for another's ball ?
When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand ?
With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart ;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortals levity may call ;
Oh blind to truth ! the sylphs contrive it all.
" Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear mirror of thy ruling star
I saw, alas ! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But heaven reveals not what, or how, or where :
Warned by the sylph, oh pious maid, beware !
This to disclose is all thy guardian can :
Beware of all, but most beware of man ! "

In the clear mirror. The language of the Platonists, the writers of the intelligible world of spirits, etc.

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue.
'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux;
Wounds, charms, and ardours were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanished from thy head.

And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.
Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux.
Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,

Th' inferior priestess. There is a small inaccuracy in these lines. He first makes his heroine the chief priestess, and then the goddess herself.

Awful, In the old sense of filling full of awe.

Set, Adjust or arrange.

Some fold the sleeve, while others plait the gown ;
And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

CANTO II

Not with more glories, in th' etherial plain,
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair nymphs, and well-drest youths around her shone,
But every eye was fixed on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those :
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends ;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide :
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.
This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.
Th' adven'trous baron the bright locks admired ;
He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,

Springes, Snares or traps.

By force to ravish, or by fraud betray ;
For when success a lover's toil attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attained his ends.
For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implored
Propitious heaven, and every power adored,
But chiefly love—to love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves ;
And all the trophies of his former loves ;
With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize :
The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.
But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sunbeams trembling on the floating tides :
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And softened sounds along the waters die ;
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.
All but the sylph—with careful thoughts opprest,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
He summons strait his denizens of air ;
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair :
Soft o'er the shrouds aërial whispers breathe,
That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold ;
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light,
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes,
While every beam new transient colours flings,

Vast French romances. One of these much in favour at the time appeared in ten volumes of eight hundred pages each !

Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
Superior by the head, was Ariel placed ;
His purple pinions opening to the sun,
He raised his azure wand, and thus begun.
" Ye sylphs and sylphids, to your chief give ear !
Fays, fairies, genii, elves, and dæmons, hear !
Ye know the spheres and various tasks assigned
By laws eternal to th' aerial kind.
Some in the fields of purest æther play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
Some less refined, beneath the moon's pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.
Others on earth o'er human race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide :
Of these the chief the care of nations own,
And guard with arms divine the British throne.
" Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care ;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprisoned essences exhale ;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers ;
To steal from rainbows ere they drop in showers
A brighter wash ; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs ;
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.
" This day, black omens threat the brightest fair,
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care ;
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight ;

Superior, Literally, lifted above the rest.
Or . . . or, Either . . . or.

But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night.
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw ;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade ;
Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade ;
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball ;
Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall.
Haste, then, ye spirits ! to your charge repair :
The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care ;
The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign ;
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine ;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite lock ;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.

" To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the petticoat :
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.

" Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopped in vials, or transfixed with pins ;
Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedged whole ages in a bodkin's eye :
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain ;
Or alum styptics with contracting power
Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flower :
Or, as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling mill,
In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below ! "

Diana's law, The law of chastity.
Styptic, A substance that stops bleeding.
Rivelled, Shrivelled, withered.
Ixion. He offended Jupiter, and was bound to a revolving wheel as a punishment.

He spoke ; the spirits from the sails descend ;
Some orb in orb, around the nymph extend ;
Some thrid the mazy ringlets of her hair ;
Some hang upon the pendants of her ear :
With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.

CANTO III

Close by those meads, for ever crowned with flowers,
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,
There stands a structure of majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
Of foreign tyrants and of nymphs at home ;
Here thou, great Anna ! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.
Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a court ;
In various talk th' instructive hours they past,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last ;
One speaks the glory of the British queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen ;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes ;
At every word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, *and all that.*
Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray ;
The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine ;
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the toilet cease.
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,
Burns to encounter two advent'rous knights,
At ombre singly to decide their doom ;
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.
Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,

Each band the number of the sacred nine.
Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card :
First Ariel perched upon a Matadore,
Then each, according to the rank they bore ;
For sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.
Behold, four Kings in majesty revered,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard ;
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flower,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer power ;
Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand ;
And parti-coloured troops, a shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.
The skilful nymph reviews her force with care :
Let Spades be trumps ! she said, and trumps they were.
Now move to war her sable Matadores,
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable lord !
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.
As many more Manillio forced to yield,
And marched a victor from the verdant field.
Him Basto followed, but his fate more hard
Gained but one trump and one plebeian card.
With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,
The rest, his many-coloured robe concealed.
The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage,
Proves the just victim of his royal rage.
Even mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew
And mowed down armies in the fights of Lu,
Sad chance of war ! now destitute of aid,

A Matadore. From the terms used in the game of ombre—spadillo, vasto, matador, punto, etc.—there can scarcely be a doubt that the other nations of Western Europe derived their knowledge of it from the Spaniards.

Falls undistinguished by the victor Spade !
Thus far both armies to Belinda yield ;
Now to the Baron fate inclines the field,
His warlike Amazon her host invades,
Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.
The Club's black tyrant first her victim dyed,
Spite of his haughty mien, and barb'rous pride :
What boots the regal circle on his head,
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread ;
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
And, of all monarch's, only grasps the globe ?
The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace ;
Th' embroidered King who shows but half his face,
And his refulgent Queen, with powers combined
Of broken troops an easy conquest find.
Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous strow the level green.
Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,
With like confusion different nations fly,
Of various habit, and of various dye,
The pierced battalions dis-united fall,
In heaps on heaps ; one fate o'erwhelms them all.
The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,
And wins (oh shameful chance !) the Queen of Hearts.
At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look ;
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and Codille.
And now (as oft in some distempered state)
On one nice trick depends the general fate,
An Ace of Hearts steps forth ; the King unseen
Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive Queen :
He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.
The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky ;
The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.
Oh thoughtless mortals ! ever blind to fate,

Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.
Sudden, these honours shall be snatched away,
And cursed for ever this victorious day.
For lo ! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round ;
On shining altars of Japan they raise
The silver lamp ; the fiery spirits blaze :
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide :
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the fair her airy band ;
Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.
Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain
New stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth ! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate !
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair !
But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill !
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case :
So ladies in romance assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends ;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant streams she bends her head.
Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair ;
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear ;
Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought

The close recesses of the virgin's thought ;
As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
He watched th' ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.
Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.
The peer now spreads the glitt'ring forfex wide,
T' inclose the Lock ; now joins it, to divide.
Even then, before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched sylph too fondly interposed ;
Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again)
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever !
Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last ;
Or when rich China vessels fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie !
Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,
(The victor cried) the glorious prize is mine !
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,
As long as *Atalantis* shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live !
What time would spare, from steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate !
Steel could the labour of the gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' imperial towers of Troy ;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound.

Atalantis, A romance written about that time by a woman; full of court and party scandal.

And hew triumphal arches to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph ! thy hairs should feel
The conq'ring force of unresisted steel ?

CANTO IV

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed,
And secret passions laboured in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robbed of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refused a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinned awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad virgin ! for thy ravished hair.

For, that sad moment, when the sylphs withdrew
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sullied the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
Repaired to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty pinions flits the gnome,
And in a vapour reached the dismal dome.
No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,
The dreadful east is all the wind that blows.
Here in a grotto, sheltered close from air,
And screened in shades from day's detested glare,
She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head.

Two handmaids wait the throne : alike in place,
But diff'ring far in figure and in face.
Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black and white arrayed ;
With store of prayers, for mornings, nights, and noons
Her hand is filled ; her bosom with lampoons.

There Affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,

Practised to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
A constant vapour o'er the palace flies ;
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise ;
Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,
Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,
Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires :
Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes, and angels in machines.
Unnumbered throngs on every side are seen,
Of bodies changed to various forms by spleen.
Here living tea-pots stand, one arm held out,
One bent ; the handle this, and that the spout :
A pipkin there, like Homer's tripod walks ;
Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pie talks.
Safe past the gnome through this fantastic band,
A branch of healing spleenwort in his hand.
Then thus addressed the power : " Hail, wayward queen !
Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen :
Parent of vapours and of female wit,
Who give th' hysteric or poetic fit,
On various tempers act by various ways,
Make some take physic, others scribble plays ;
Who cause the proud their visits to delay,
And send the godly in a pet to pray.
A nymph there is, that all thy power disdains,
And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
But oh ! if e'er thy gnome could spoil a grace,
Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
Like citron-waters matrons cheeks inflame,
Or change complexions at a losing game ;
Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen."
The goddess with a discontented air

Seems to reject him, though she grants his prayer.
A wondrous bag with both her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the winds ;
There she collects the force of female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.
A vial next she fills with fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.
The gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.
Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.
Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,
And all the Furies issued at the vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.
" Oh wretched maid ! " she spread her hands, and cried,
(While Hampton's echoes, " Wretched maid ! " replied)
" Was it for this you took such constant care
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare ?
For this your locks in paper durance bound,
For this with torturing irons wreathed around ?
For this with fillets strained your tender head,
And bravely bore the double loads of lead ?
Gods ! shall the ravisher display your hair,
While the fops envy, and the ladies stare !
Honour forbid ! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.
Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost !
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend ?
'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend !
And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,

Thalestris, Mrs. Morley, sister of the Sir Plume mentioned later.

Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,
And heightened by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for ever blaze ?
Sooner shall grass in Hyde-Park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow ;
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all ! "
She said ; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her beau demand the precious hairs :
(Sir Plume of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane)
With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
And thus broke out—" My lord, why, what the devil ?
Z—ds ! damn the Lock ! 'fore Gad, you must be civil !
Plague on't ! 'tis past a jest—nay prithee, pox !
Give her the hair "—he spoke, and rapped his box.
" It grieves me much " (replied the peer again)
" Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.
But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear,
(Which never more shall join its parted hair ;
Which never more its honours shall renew,
Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew)
That while my nostrils draw the vital air,
This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."
He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours of her head.
But Umbriel, hateful gnome ! forbears not so ;
He breaks the vial whence the sorrows flow.
Then see ! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,
Her eyes half-languishing, half-drowned in tears ;
On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head,

Sound of Bow, Within sound of the bells of Bow Church in the City of London.

Sir Plume, Sir George Brown. He was the only one of the party who took the thing seriously. He was angry that the poet should make him talk nothing but nonsense ; and, in truth, one could not well blame him.

Clouded, A cane decorated with cord and tassel.

Which, with a sigh, she raised ; and thus she said :
" For ever cursed be this detested day,
Which snatched my best, my fav'rite curl away !
Happy ! ah ten times happy had I been,
If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen !
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By love of courts to numerous ills betrayed.
Oh had I rather un-admired remained
In some lone isle, or distant northern land ;
Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn ombre, none e'er taste Bohea !
There kept my charms concealed from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.
What moved my mind with youthful lords to roam ?
Oh had I stayed, and said my prayers at home !
'Twas this, the morning omens seemed to tell,
Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell ;
The tott'ring china shook without a wind,
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind !
A sylph too warned me of the threats of fate,
In mystic visions, now believed too late !
See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs !
My hands shall rend what even thy rapine spares :
These in two sable ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck :
The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate foresees its own ;
Uncurled it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.
Oh hadst thou, cruel ! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these ! "

CANTO V

She said : the pitying audience melt in tears,
But Fate and Jove had stopped the Baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails ?

Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain,
While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain.
Then grave Clarissa graceful waved her fan ;
Silence ensued, and thus the nymph began.
" Say why are beauties praised and honoured most,
The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast ?
Why decked with all that land and sea afford,
Why angels called, and angel-like adored ?
Why round our coaches crowd the white-gloved beaux,
Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows ;
How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains :
That men may say, when we the front-box grace :
' Behold the first in virtue as in face ! '
Oh ! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
Charmed the small-pox, or chased old-age away ;
Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use ?
To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint,
Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.
But since, alas ! frail beauty must decay,
Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey ;
Since, painted or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man, must die a maid ;
What then remains but well our power to use,
And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose ?
And trust me, dear ! good-humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll ;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul."
So spoke the dame, but no applause ensued ;
Belinda frowned, Thalestris called her prude.
" To arms, to arms ! " the fierce virago cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack ;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack ;
Heroes' and heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,

And bass and treble voices strike the skies.
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.
So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,
And heavenly breasts with human passions rage ;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars ; Latona, Hermes arms ;
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms :
Jove's thunder roars, heaven trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound :
Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way,
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day !
Triumphant Umbriel on a sconce's height
Clapped his glad wings, and sate to view the fight :
Propped on their bodkin spears, the sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist the fray.
While through the press enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.
" O cruel nymph ! a living death I bear,"
Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.
A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
" Those eyes are made so killing "—was his last.
Thus on Mæander's flowery margin lies
Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.
When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed him with a frown ;
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,
But, at her smile, the beau revived again.
Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
Weights the men's wits against the lady's hair ;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side ;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.
See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes :
Nor feared the chief th' unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.

But this bold lord with manly strength endued,
She with one finger and a thumb subdued :
Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw ;
The gnomes direct, to every atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust.
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.

"Now meet thy fate," incensed Belinda cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
(The same, his ancient personage to deck,
Her great-great-grandsire wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings ; which after, melted down,
Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown :
Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew ;
Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)

"Boast not my fall" (he cried), "insulting foe !
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low,
Nor think, to die dejects my lofty mind :
All that I dread is leaving you behind !
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's flames—but burn alive."

"Restore the Lock ! " she cries ; and all around
"Restore the Lock ! " the vaulted roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain.
But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,
And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost !
The Lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pain,
In every place is sought, but sought in vain :
With such a prize no mortal must be blest,
So heaven decrees ! with heaven who can contest ?

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,
Since all things lost on earth are treasured there.
There hero's wits are kept in pond'rous vases,
And beau's in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases.

There broken vows and death-bed alms are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends of riband bound,
The courtier's promises, and sick man's prayers,
The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.
But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,
Though marked by none but quick, poetic eyes :
(So Rome's great founder to the heavens withdrew,
To Proculus alone confessed in view)
A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
Not Berenice's Locks first rose so bright,
The heavens bespangling with dishevelled light.
The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleased pursue its progress through the skies.
This the beau-monde shall from the Mall survey,
And hail with music its propitious ray.
This the blest lover shall for Venus take,
And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake.
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes ;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.
Then cease, bright nymph ! to mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere !
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the Lock you lost.

Proculus. He saw Romulus translated to the skies at his death.
Berenice. The wife of Ptolemy III. of Egypt, who gave her hair to the war-god as a thank-offering for her husband's victories ; but it was stolen, and the king was informed that it had been carried up to the sky, where it forms the seven stars near the tail of the constellation Leo.
Beau-monde, The world of gallants.
This Partridge soon. John Partridge was a ridiculous star-gazer, who in his Almanacks every year never failed to predict the downfall of the Pope, and the King of France, then at war with the English.
Galileo's eyes, The telescope.

For, after all the murders of your eye,
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

COMMENTARY

It is not the subject, which is slight and foolish enough, even tedious; nor the wonderfully detailed and vivid picture of Society in the time of Queen Anne: but the close imitation of a heroic poem on a lofty theme, such as the Fall of Troy or the Taking of the Fleece, which constitutes the particular value and significance of this masterpiece of the eighteenth century.

It is written in the metre best suited to the recounting of great deeds, and in what are indeed known as "heroic" couplets such as the same poet used in his translation of Homer's *Iliad*. It has a "machinery" of supernatural beings closely concerned in the fortunes of mortals, and taking part in their quarrels, just as in Homer the gods and goddesses take sides and help their favourites at crucial moments. There is the same appeal to intense emotion, the same slow action and postponement of the crisis, which is described with "tremendous" power in inverse proportion to the importance of the theme. Compare the following:

"Yet ceased not Hector thus; but stooping down,
In his strong hand upheaved a flinty stone,
Black, craggy, vast: to this his force he bends:
Full on the brazen boss the stone descends;
The hollow brass resounded with the shock:
Then Ajax seized the fragment of a rock,
Applied each nerve, and swinging round on high,
With force tempestuous, let the ruin fly."

"Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs, breathe their last;

Or when rich China vessels fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie."

The second of the above extracts reminds us that *The Rape of the Lock* owes much of its effect to its numerous contrasts, many of them highly satirical, as in the fourth line of this particular passage. Other examples can be readily discovered, and the neatness and fitness of the epithets should also be carefully studied. The poem is a piece of delicate mosaic in marked contrast to Chaucer's Prologue, with its broad sweep of bright colour and background of vivid English greenery.

This poem provides a good pattern for parody; and some attempt might be made, even if the result is very slight. Choose a subject such as "The Defence of the Goal Posts," and build up your poem from actual observation of a game, during which epithets, similes, and metaphors will probably suggest themselves; but you will not be able to compose the poem as you watch.

ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THOMAS GRAY (1716–1771)

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that, from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care ;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke ;
How jocund did they drive their team afield !
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke !

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Rude, Simple, unlettered.

Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death ?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ,
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll ;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
The little Tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest,—
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade : nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined ;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,

Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray ;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply :
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind ?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires ;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonoured Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tales relate ;
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
" Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

" There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

" Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove ;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

" One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree ;
Another came ; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he ;

" The next, with dirges due in sad array
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.—
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon agèd thorn.'

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown :
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send :
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

COMMENTARY

So far as form and feeling are concerned, this is one of the most perfect poems in any language. Why is it so considered?

It is almost flawless in form—rhythm, metre, rhyme—so perfect, indeed, that only its comparative shortness saves it from monotony. It is full of clear, perfectly-finished pictures, including what we might call the sound-picture:

"The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea."

"Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke."

Its tone is that of a tender melancholy, but it rises in places to what might be described as the majesty of the lowly—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted them of low degree."—"Not many wise men, not many noble, not many mighty."

Epithet, simile, metaphor, personification, and alliteration, are fitting and satisfying—"*droning* flight"; "*ivy-mantled* tower."

"The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn."

"But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll."

The fact that so many of its phrases have been so often quoted that they have become proverbial, even the fact that it is often parodied, is a testimony to the hold that the poem has on the English mind and heart; and it is peculiarly English in every respect.

The line is an iambic pentameter arranged with alternate rhymes, nearly all of which ring with perfect clearness.

In order to copy the verses it is necessary to have an actual scene before the eye. Try a stanza or two while contemplating some quiet scene, a moonlit or starlit night or a summer sea. Polish and repolish each stanza, and then put your composition carefully away.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728–1774)

SWEET AUBURN! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's ling'ring blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene;
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whisp'ring lovers made;
How often have I blessed the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;

Sweet Auburn. Any typical village of Goldsmith's time, but the poet was doubtless drawing upon his memories of the Irish village of Lissoy where his boyhood was spent, while several of the figures of the poem are portraits of real people, or composite portraits of several people, chief among them the village preacher, who might be compared with Chaucer's poor parson (see page 24). The depopulation of the village through the encroachment of wealthy landowners was often in Goldsmith's mind.

The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out to tire each other down ;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place ;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove :
These were thy charms, sweet village ; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please ;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms—But all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn ;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green :
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain :
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges, works its weedy way.
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest ;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mould'ring wall ;
And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade ;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made ;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man ;

Hollow-sounding bittern. The loud booming call of the bittern may be heard during the breeding season.

For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more :
His best companions, innocence and health ;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered ; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain ;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose ;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green ;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet AUBURN ! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wand'rings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down ;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw ;
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,

Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations passed,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
How happy he who crowns in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease ;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly !
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep ;
No surly porter stands in guilty state
To spurn imploring famine from the gate ;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending Virtue's friend ;
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
While Resignation gently slopes the way ;
And, all his prospects bright'ning to the last,
His Heaven commences ere the world be passed !

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose ;
There, as I passed with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below ;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young ;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school ;
The watchdog's voice that bayed the whisp'ring wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind :
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
All but yon widowed, solitary thing

That feebly bends beside the plashy spring ;
She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry fagot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn ;
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild ;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year ;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place ;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour ;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wand'rings, but relieved their pain ;
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast ;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed ;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away ;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe ;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to Virtue's side.
But in his duty prompt at every call,

He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all ;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and Anguish fled the struggling soul ;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last falt'ring accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place ;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service passed, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran ;
Even children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed ;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school ;
A man severe he was, and stern to view ;
I knew him well, and every truant knew ;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face ;
Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,

At all his jokes, for many a joke had he ;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned ;
Yet he was kind ; or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault ;
The village all declared how much he knew ;
'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too ;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still ;
While words of learned length and thund'ring sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.

But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place ;
The white-washed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door ;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day ;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose ;

The twelve good rules, Twelve rules or moral instructions said to have been drawn up by Charles I., such as "Pick no quarrels," "Make no long meals," etc.

The royal game of goose. A counter game of the period, so called because a goose was shown upon the board, and if a player's cast fell upon it he got a double move.

The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay ;
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain, transitory splendours ! Could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall !
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart ;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care ;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail ;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his pond'rous strength, and lean to hear ;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round ;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes ! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train ;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art ;
Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway ;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined :
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain ;
And, e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
'Tis yours to judge, how wide the limits stand

Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore ;
Hoards e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied ;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds ;
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth ;
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green ;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies ;
While thus the land adorned for pleasure, all
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female unadorned and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes :
But when those charms are passed, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress.
Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed,
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed ;
But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise ;
While scourged by famine from the smiling land,
The mournful peasant leads his humble band ;
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden, and a grave.

Where then, ah ! where, shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride ?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped—What waits him there ?
To see profusion that he must not share ;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury and thin mankind ;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know
Extorted from his fellow creatures' woe.
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade ;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train ;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy !
Sure these denote one universal joy !
Are these thy serious thoughts ?—Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shiv'ring female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blessed,
Has wept at tales of innocence distressed ;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn ;
Now lost to all, her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

The black gibbet. Public executions were not abolished until 1866.

Do thine, sweet AUBURN, thine, the loveliest train—
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain ?
E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread !

Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charmed before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore ;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day ;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling ;
Those pois'nous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around ;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake ;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey
And savage men more murd'rous still than they ;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.

Good Heaven ! what sorrows gloomed that parting
day,
That called them from their native walks away ;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure passed,

Altama, The river Altamaha in Georgia, the founder of which, General Oglethorpe, was well known to Goldsmith.

The vengeful snake . . . crouching tigers. Goldsmith's geography and natural history ought not to be criticized. Boswell tells us that Johnson said Goldsmith's knowledge of natural history did not extend far beyond distinguishing a cow from a horse.

Hung round their bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main ;
And shudd'ring still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe ;
But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear ;
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.

O Luxury ! thou cursed by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee !
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy !
Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own ;
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe ;
Till sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

E'en now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done ;
E'en now, methinks, as pond'ring here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land :
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with ev'ry gale,

Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness, are there ;
And piety, with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade ;
Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame ;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride ;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so ;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well !
Farewell, and oh ! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime ;
Aid slighted truth ; with thy persuasive strain
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain ;
Teach him, that states of native strength possessed,
Though very poor, may still be very blessed ;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away ;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

COMMENTARY

We do not go to Goldsmith for politics or economics, or, as already noted, for geography or natural history. He touches on all these matters in the poem we have just

Torno's cliffs, The river Tornea in Sweden.
Pambamarca, A mountain in Ecuador.

read, and we skip his references to them or amuse ourselves with them.

Why, then, is *The Deserted Village* rightly considered one of the sweetest and most gracious compositions in the English language? Because of its humanity. "Let us not forget," says one modern writer,* "that Goldsmith belongs not to the town (any more than to the city or the club), but to the fields. There his treasure and his heart is. He had laid up his treasure in the long years of his vagabondage; and his most characteristic efforts, those efforts in which he illustrates most movingly our common nature, proceed from the pieties of youthful memory. His true spiritual riches are the poverty of his youth, and his best skill to illumine tenderly for each of us the deserted village of the heart, its broken roads and unfinished purposes."

The poem is highly pictorial, and the pictures are not usually studies of still life but motion pictures:

> "Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,
> At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
> Full well the busy whisper circling round,
> Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned."

Other pictures may be easily detached, each forming a unity in itself.

The extended simile is another noteworthy feature: "And as a hare . . ."; "And as a bird . . ."; "As some tall cliff . . ." and others here and there. So well has the poem been read, studied, and loved, that some of its phrases and lines have become proverbial, being usually quoted incorrectly.

It is interesting to compare the attitude towards rustic life of Milton, Gray, and Goldsmith.

The metre is that of the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, which *The Deserted Village* resembles in its broad humanity, its tenderness, and its humour, while we have already noted the parallelism between Chaucer's "poor parson of a town" and Goldsmith's "village preacher." The measure is perhaps one of the easiest to imitate or parody, and it ought to be easy to find a reflective subject, such as a pageant or procession.

* Professor Garrod of Oxford.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

S. T. COLERIDGE (1772–1834)

ARGUMENT

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancient Mariner came back to his own Country.

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
" By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me ?

" The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin ;
The guests are met, the feast is set :
Mayst hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand :
" There was a ship," quoth he.
" Hold off ! unhand me, grey-beard loon ! "
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child :
The Mariner hath his will.

Eftsoons. The use of this old word, and others employed later, helps to create atmosphere, throwing back the story in time; how far back matters as little as the exact " tropical latitude " named in the Argument.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :
He cannot chuse but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

" The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

" The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he !
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

" Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon——"
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she ;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot chuse but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Marinere.

" And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong :
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

" With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,

And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

" And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold :
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

" And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen :
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

" The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound !

" At length did cross an Albatross.
Thorough the fog it came ;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

" It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit,
The helmsman steered us through.

" And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo !

" In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine ;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

" God save thee, ancient Mariner !
From the fiends that plague thee thus !—
Why look'st thou so ? "—" With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross."

PART II

" The Sun now rose upon the right :
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

" And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo !

" And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe :
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
' Ah wretch ! ' said they, ' the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow ! '

" Nor dim nor red, like God's own head
The glorious sun uprist :
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
' 'Twas right,' said they, ' such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.'

" The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free ;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

" Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be ;

And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea !

" All in a hot and copper sky.
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

" Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion :
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

" Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

" The very deep did rot : O Christ !
That ever this should be !
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

" About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night ;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

" And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so ;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

" And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root ;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

" Ah ! well-a-day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young !
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung."

PART III

" THERE passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed every eye.
A weary time ! a weary time !
How glazed each weary eye,
When, looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

" At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist ;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

" A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !
And still it neared and neared :
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

" With throats unslacked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail ;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood !
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail ! a sail !

" With throats unslacked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call :
Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

" See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !
Hither to work us weal ;

Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel !

" The western wave was all a-flame,
The day was well-nigh done !
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun ;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

" And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace !)
As if through a dungeon grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

" Alas ! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears !
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres ?

" Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate ?
And is that Woman all her crew ?
Is that a Death ? and are there two ?
Is Death that woman's mate ?

" Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold :
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

" The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice ;
' The game is done ! I've won, I've won ! '
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

" The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out ;
At one stride comes the dark ;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea
Off shot the spectre-bark.

" We listened and looked sideways up !
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip !
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white ;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

" One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

" Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan,)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

" The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe !
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow ! "

PART IV

" I FEAR thee, ancient Mariner !
I fear thy skinny hand !
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

" I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—
" Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest !
This body dropt not down.

" Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea !
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

" The many men, so beautiful !
And they all dead did lie :
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on ; and so did I.

" I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away ;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

" I looked to heaven, and tried to pray ;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

" I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat ;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

" The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they :
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

" An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high ;

But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

" The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

" Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

" Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

" Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

" O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

" The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free

The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

PART V

" Oh Sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven,
That slid into my soul.

" The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

" My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

" I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessèd ghost.

" And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails.
That were so thin and sere.

" The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

" And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud,
The Moon was at its edge.

" The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side :
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

" The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on !
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

" They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

" The helmsman steered, the ship moved on ;
Yet never a breeze up blew ;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do ;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

" The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee :
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."

" I fear thee, ancient Mariner ! "
" Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest !
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest :

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast ;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

" Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun ;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

" Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing ;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

" And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

" It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

" Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe :
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

" Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid : and it was he
That made the ship to go.

The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

" The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean :
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length,
With a short uneasy motion.

" Then, like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound :
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

" How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare ;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard, and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

" ' Is it he ? ' quoth one, ' Is this the man ?
By Him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

" ' The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

" The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, ' The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.' "

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

" ' But tell me, tell me ! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
What is the ocean doing ? '

SECOND VOICE

" ' Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast ;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

" ' If he may know which way to go ;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see ! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

" ' But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind ? '

SECOND VOICE

' The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

" ' Fly, brother, fly ! more high, more high !
Or we shall be belated :
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

" I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather :
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high ;
The dead men stood together.

" All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

" The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away :
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

" And now this spell was snapt : once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

" Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

" But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made :
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

" It raised my hair, it fann'd my cheek,
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

" Swiftly, swiftly, flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

" Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
The light-house top I see ?
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
Is this mine own countree ?

" We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God !
Or let me sleep alway.

" The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn !
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

" The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock :
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

" And the bay was white with silent light,
Till, rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

" A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ ! what saw I there !

" Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And by the holy rood !

A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

" This seraph-band, each waved his hand.
It was a heavenly sight !
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light ;

" This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

" But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer ;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

" The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast :
Dear Lord in heaven ! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

" I saw a third—I heard his voice :
It is the Hermit good !
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood."

PART VII

" This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

" He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump :
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak stump.

" The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,
' Why, this is strange, I trow !
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now ? '

" ' Strange, by my faith ! ' the Hermit said—
' And they answered not our cheer.
The planks looked warped ! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere !
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

" ' Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along ;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

" ' Dear Lord ! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared.'—' Push on, push on ! '
Said the Hermit cheerily.

" The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred ;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

" Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread :
It reached the ship, it split the bay :
The ship went down like lead.

" Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat ;
But, swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

" Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round ;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

" I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit ;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

" I took the oars : the Pilot's boy.
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
' Ha ! ha ! ' quoth he, ' full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

" And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

" ' O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man ! '
The Hermit crossed his brow.
' Say quick,' quoth he, ' I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou ? '

" Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale ;
And then it left me free.

" Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns :
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

" I pass, like night, from land to land ;
I have strange power of speech ;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me :
To him my tale I teach.

" What loud uproar bursts from that door !
The wedding-guests are there :
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer.

" O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

" O sweeter than the marriage feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company !—

" To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay !

" Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest !—
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

" He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the Bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.

COMMENTARY

Here we have one of the most powerfully imaginative poems in any language. It is impossible to say how the poet gets his tremendous effect, but it is very interesting and stimulative to try to do so.

The poem is notable for its stark simplicity, many of the lines and sometimes complete stanzas being monosyllabic, including one of the finest pen-pictures:

> " The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
> At one stride comes the dark."

These pen-pictures, many of them motion-pictures, are another notable feature of the work, and there is none more wonderful than that of the stanzas in Part III. describing the approach of the phantom ship. No less remarkable are the epithets—*copper* sky; *bloody* sun; *star-dogged* Moon; *blessed* ghost—and the continued avoidance of the commonplace or obvious—*e.g.*, instead of a direct statement that the ship has taken a southerly course we are told that

> " The Sun came up upon the left,
> Out of the sea came he!
> And he shone bright, and on the right
> Went down into the sea."

Note, too, how the woman and her "fleshless mate" are introduced.

Examples of onomatopœia abound, *e.g.* :

(1) It cracked and growled and roared and howled.
(2) They dropped down, one by one.
(3) Like the whizz of my cross-bow.
(4) The ship went down like lead.

Further, the poem is full of haunting music. Read softly and quietly the lines in Part V. beginning

"Sometimes a-dropping from the sky,"

and concluding with

"Singeth a quiet tune."

But we may study and appreciate all these features of the poem without getting any explanation of its magic. The poet may have borrowed his ideas here and there, but he did not borrow his genius, his power to create the eerie atmosphere and put himself into the skin of the old sailor. He does this completely, and we must judge an objective poem like *The Ancient Mariner* from this point of view, refusing to look for a moral or lesson, and applying the simple test "Is this true to the character and experience of the man who has been created by the poet's imagination?"

To the present writer at least, the last two stanzas are unnecessary, and spoil the conclusion of the poem. They are subjective and out of the picture, while they also seem to point a moral which does not adorn the tale. Here is a subject for discussion and the expression of free opinion, for it is of no use attempting to use this poem as a pattern for imitation except perhaps for purposes of parody.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

ROBERT BURNS (1759–1796)

My loved, my honoured, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays:
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing in simple Scottish lays
The lowly train in life's sequestered scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through
To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

Ingle, Fire or fireplace.

Belyve the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out amang the farmers roun' ;
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town :
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

Wi' joy unfeigned brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly speirs :
The social hours, swift-winged, unnoticed fleet ;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears ;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years ;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new ;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command
The younkers a' are warned to obey ;
An' mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play :
An' Oh ! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
' An' mind your duty, duely, morn an' night !
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might :
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright ! '

But hark ! a rap comes gently to the door ;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,

Belyve, Presently.
Braw, Fine.
Speirs, Questions.
Uncos, News ; literally the " unknown " things.
Eydent, Diligent.
Tentie, Attentive.
Penny-fee, Wages : not necessarily only a penny.
Jauk, Trifle.

Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck, anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleased the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome Jenny brings him ben;
A strappan youth; he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But, blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel-pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've paced much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
'If Heaven a draught of heav'nly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale.'

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can with studied, sly, ensnaring art
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?

Hafflins, Almost; literally half.
Ben, Into the inner part of the house.
Kye, Cattle. *Blate*, Shy. *Lave*, Rest.

Curse on his perjured arts ! dissembling smooth !
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exiled ?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child ?
Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction wild !

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food :
The soupe their only Hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallen snugly chows her cood ;
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hained kebbuck, fell,
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid ;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face
They round the ingle form a circle wide ;
The sire turns o'er wi' patriarchal grace
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride :
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare ;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care ;
And ' Let us worship God ! ' he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim ;
Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name ;
Or noble Elgin beets the heav'nward flame,

Hawkie, The cow.
'Yont the hallen, Beyond the hallen, *i.e.* the low partition wall or screen between the door and the fireplace. Was the cow, then, kept in the cottage ? The reader, if Scottish, may be able to find out.
Weel-hained kebbuck, Carefully kept cheese.
Towmond, Twelvemonth.
Sin' lint was i' the bell, When flax was in flower.
Lyart haffets, Grey temples. *Wales*, Chooses.
Dundee, Martyrs, Elgin, Names of Scottish psalm tunes.

The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame ;
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise ;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high ;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;
Or how the royal Bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire ;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry ;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ;
Or other holy Seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme ;
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head ;
How His first followers and servants sped ;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land ;
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays :
Hope " springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
That thus they all shall meet in future days :
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear ;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

" *Springs exulting on triumphant wing.*" A quotation from Pope.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The Pow'r, incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul,
And in his Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of God:"
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health and peace and sweet content!
And, Oh, may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion weak and vile;

An honest man's, etc. Quoted from Pope's *Essay on Man*.

Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved Isle.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed thro' Wallace's undaunted heart;
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God peculiarly Thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert,
But still the patriot and the patriot-bard
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

COMMENTARY

This poem at once recalls Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* and Gray's *Elegy*, and invites comparison with regard to form and content.

The stanza is that of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (see p. 38), a difficult form, with its long concluding line and very regular rhyme arrangement. Burns handles it well, using such fill-up phrases or clichés as " I ween " (line 9) very sparingly. His language is a rather curious mixture of English and Ayrshire, and this gives him a little wider choice of rhymes, as when he links the Ayrshire *rin* (run) with the English *in*, and the Ayrshire *speirs* (asks) with the English *hears*. Other examples of this assisted rhyming may be readily found.

The real value of the poem lies in the fact that Burns is speaking of " the little things he knows about," and not merely looking down from an " educated " or " cultured " point of view upon the doings of the humbly born. Do you like the last two stanzas as well as the rest of the poem? Consider the fitness or otherwise of omitting these stanzas in order to obtain an ending on a high note. Say frankly what you think.

Which stanzas and lines do you consider the finest?

Which lines or phrases contain echoes of Gray's *Elegy* or Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*?

Select material from either Goldsmith or Gray (or both) and try to throw it into the "Saturday Night" stanza. The exercise is stimulating and amusing, but the result ought not to be sent to the local paper.

ODE

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

I

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief ;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong :
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep ;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong ;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay ;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday !
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
shepherd boy !

IV

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make ; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee ;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal ;
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day ! if I were sullen
While the earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May morning,
And the children are pulling,
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers ; while the sun shines warm
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm :—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !
But there's a tree, of many, one,

A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone :
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat.
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,—
He sees it in his joy ;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended ;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part,
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the persons, down to palsied age,
That life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage; thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find;
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;

Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by ;—
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom, on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife ?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

IX

O joy ! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive !
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benedictions : not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast ;
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise ;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised :
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,

Are yet a master light of all our seeing,
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence ; truths that wake,
To perish never ;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy !
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song !
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound !
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May !
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind ;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been, must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering ;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves !
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
I only have relinquished one delight,
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks, which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet ;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality !
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

COMMENTARY

Recall what you have already learnt about the poetic verse-pattern known as the Ode (see pp. 66 and 82).

Examine the stanzas, their length, arrangement of lines, rhymes, and rhythms. Are any two stanzas exactly alike in form ? What is the effect of this variation ? What emotion leads to the adoption of short lines ? (Rewrite some of the short line portions in longer lines and note what has been lost.)

Francis Palgrave, editor of *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, writes concerning his choice of pieces, "Lyrical has been held essentially to imply that each poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation." Does this Ode by Wordsworth come under this heading ?

A lyric was originally a poem to be sung to the lyre. Is there any musical quality in this Ode, and how do you think the poet produces it ?

What does another writer mean when he says that the poem is a " blend of simplicity and majesty " ?

It is interesting to detach some of the word-pictures, and to pick out the phrases so often quoted that they have become proverbs or at least proverbial.

It is not easy to detach the " argument " of the poem, but the attempt should be made. Having made your own summary of the general meaning of the poem, ask yourself a few intimate, private questions in order to test the truth of the poet's ideas, *as far as they apply to yourself.* (The highest poetry is always an intimate personal matter between the reader and the poet.) Do you think Wordsworth himself had lost " the vision splendid," partly or entirely, and lived only " in the light of common day " ? Is the end of the poem very far removed in spirit from the beginning ?

LINES

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR (*July* 13, 1798).

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

FIVE years have past ; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters ! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion ; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves

'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration :—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened :—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts

Have followed ; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains ; and of all that we behold
From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive ; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay :
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river ; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend ; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister ! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege,

Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy : for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee : and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure ; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations ! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together ; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service : rather say
With warmer love—oh ! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake !

COMMENTARY

A modern poet has spoken of blank verse as "that noble and distinctively English possession . . . a perfect vehicle of thought and feeling"; and in the lines you have just read we have one of the finest sustained pieces of blank verse in our literature. The thought is too much of a quietly reflective and musing character to be confined within the limits of rhyme or even of five-foot lines—notice how few of the lines are end-stopt, how the thought flows onward, and the pause frequently comes in the middle of a line.

The theme is the influence of Nature upon the mind of man; but the poem is humanized by the introduction of Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, as if to remind us that it takes two people who love and partly understand each other to get all that can be got by the human heart and spirit out of Nature's influence.

Where does the theme touch that of the *Ode*? How far are the two poems like and unlike to each other?

For imitation one needs material. Here are two passages from Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* which might serve:

"(1) *Alfoxden, Somerset, January* 20, 1798.

"The green paths down the hillsides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges; the sheep are gathered together on the slopes. After the wet, dark days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers. The purple-starred hepatica spreads itself in the sun, and the clustering snowdrops put forth their white heads, at first upright, ribbed with green, and like a rosebud when completely opened, hanging their heads downwards, but slowly lengthening their slender stems. The slanting woods are of an unvarying brown, showing the light through the thin network of their upper boughs. Upon the highest ridge of that round hill covered with planted oaks the shafts of the trees show in the light like the columns of a ruin.

"(2) *Alfoxden, February* 3, 1798.

"A mild morning, the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Coleridge over the hills. The sea at first obscured by vapour; that vapour afterwards slid in one mighty mass along the seashore; the islands and one point of land clear beyond it. The distant country (which was purple in the dull, clear air) overhung by straggling clouds, which are often seen at a great distance apparently motionless, while the nearer ones pass quickly over them, driven by the lower winds. I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea. The clouds beneath our feet spread themselves to the water, and the clouds of the sky almost joined them. Gathered sticks in the wood; a perfect stillness. The redbreasts sang upon the leafless boughs. Of a great number of sheep in the field, only one standing. Returned to dinner at five o'clock. The moonlight still and warm as a summer's night at nine o'clock."

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

JOHN KEATS (1795–1821)

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
  My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
  One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
  But being too happy in thine happiness,—
    That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
      In some melodious plot
  Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
    Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
  Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,

Lethe, The river of forgetfulness, one of the five which flowed through the Underworld of the Ancients.

Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim;

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows

Hippocrene, The fountain of the Muses.

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen ; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy !
Still would'st thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades :
Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
Fled is that music ;—do I wake or sleep ?

COMMENTARY

Refer to pages 66 and 82 for notes on the *Ode*, and, if possible, to page 182 of *Pattern Poetry—Part II.*, as well as to Gray's Pindaric ode *The Bard*, printed on pages 190–194 of the same volume.

Now study the form of this *Ode* by John Keats.

Next, mark the passages which have appealed to you in a particular way, and which you have probably heard or seen quoted in various places. Make up your mind how they are connected with the theme of the poem. What *is* the theme?

Does anything appear to you to be strange or incongruous in the first two lines of stanzas 5 and 7?

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

JOHN KEATS (1795–1821)

THOU still unravished bride of quietness!
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearièd,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st:
Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

COMMENTARY

It will interest and entertain you to let your fancy play round the pictures on the three Grecian urns shown on page 175. Perhaps they will inspire you to the composition of a Keatsian stanza.

ADONAIS

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS

Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν Ἔως·
νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις Ἔσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.—PLATO.*

P. B. SHELLEY (1792–1822)

I

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead !
O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say : " With me
Died Adonais ; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity ! "

II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies

The shaft which flies. Keats died of consumption at Rome in 1821, at the age of twenty-four. Shelley wrote in his Preface to

* Shelley supplies the translation in his quatrain " To Stella " :

" Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled ;—
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead."

In darkness ? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died ? With veilèd eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

III

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead !
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep !
Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend ;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air ;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again !
Lament anew, Urania !—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood ; he went, unterrified,

Adonais: "The savage criticism on his *Endymion* which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted." This may be sentimental and exaggerated, but we must remember what were Shelley's views as we read his poem.

Urania, One of the Muses.

Into the gulf of death ; but his clear Sprite
Yet rings o'er earth ; the third among the sons of light.

V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Not all to that bright station dared to climb ;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished ; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished—
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew ;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away !

The third, Milton. The other two were either Homer or Virgil or Homer and Dante.

Not all to that bright station. This stanza appears to mean, "Some poets have wisely not attempted to write epics like those of Milton, but have kept to a lower level like Burns and Gray, and are still remembered as lyrists; others have followed a middle course, and, like Spenser, have been cut off in the midst of their work; others, again, are still living of whom nothing definite can yet be said."

Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay ;
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX

Oh, weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,
The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung ; and mourn
their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries :
" Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead ;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise !

She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them ;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her brow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak ;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

XII

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music : the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

XIII

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aëreal eyes that kindle day ;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year ?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais : wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears ; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;

Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

XVIII

Ah, woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year ;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear ;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere :
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos ; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst ;
Diffuse themselves ; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd might.

XX

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death

And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning ?—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI

Alas ! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !
Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene
The actors or spectators ? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

XXII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !
" Wake thou," cried Misery, " childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried : " Arise ! "
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,

Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania ;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell ;
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
" Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not ! " cried Urania : her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

XXVI

" Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again ;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live ;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,

With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

XXVII

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then

The herded wolves, The critics. The poet returns again and again to this idea, but the theme of the poem is not so important as the poem itself.

The Pythian of the age, Byron, who savagely attacked his own critics in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. The same poet is called "The Pilgrim of Eternity" a few lines later.

Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again ;
So is it in the world of living men :
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

XXX

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men ; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

Ierne, Ireland. The reference is to Thomas Moore, who wrote lines to Robert Emmet, the leader in the insurrection of 1803. All this is fanciful enough. Byron was not particularly kind to Keats' memory, and Moore did not write of him.

One frail Form, Shelley himself.

XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked ;—a Power
Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue ;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart ;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears ; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow ; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured : " Who art thou ? "
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh ! that it should be so !

XXXV

What softer voice is hushed over the dead ?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown ?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan ?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh !
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe ?
The nameless worm would now itself disown :
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !
Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !
But be thyself, and know thyself to be !
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow :
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

Gentlest of the wise, Leigh Hunt, the earliest friend of Keats. It was, however, a young artist named Severn who attended the poet in his last moments, but Shelley did not know this when he wrote his poem.

XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

XXXIX

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,

Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

XLII

He is made one with Nature : there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot

The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
" Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
" It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng ! "

XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais ? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch ! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth ;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light

Chatterton, Sidney, Lucan (A.D. 39–65). All died young, and left little behind them. It was no great honour for Keats to be " one of " these.

Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference : then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night ;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy : 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought ;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey ;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread ;

L

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;

Grey walls moulder round. Shelley writes : "Keats . . . was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."

And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

LI

Here pause : these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each ; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become ?

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart ?
Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here
They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !
A light is passed from the revolving year,

And man, and woman ; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near :
'Tis Adonais calls ! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst ; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given ;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar ;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

COMMENTARY

Shelley was not a personal friend to Keats, who did not respond to his advances probably from a quite baseless fear of patronage on the part of one who was so much higher in the social scale than himself ; and though critics place Keats high among our poets, his work scarcely merited this surpassing tribute of a fellow singer. Moreover, as already noted, Keats would undoubtedly have died if the critics had all been favourable.

We must study the poem itself to discover its greatness and its outstanding merits. It ought to be taken a few stanzas at a time; it is so packed with emotion, so full of wonderful pictures, marvellous similes and metaphors, beauty of phrase and haunting melody, that the brain reels and the heart melts under its influence. It is a heady wine to be sipped in small quantities.

No one who runs as he reads can picture a "lucid urn of starry dew"; and this is one of many metaphors whose delicacy is almost too evanescent for the mortal mind.

The poem is on a high level throughout, but there are peaks which soar into the ether, such as the stanza which begins:

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep!"

and others which you can discover for yourself.

What is the pattern of the stanza? How does the poem compare, or contrast, with *Lycidas* (1) in form, (2) in substance?

Imitation seems impossible—for ordinary people!

THE LOTOS-EATERS

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809–1892)

"COURAGE!" he said, and pointed toward the land
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall, and pause, and fall did seem.

He said. Odysseus. The incident comes from Book xi. of the *Odyssey* of Homer, wherein we are told that the ship of Odysseus came to the land of the Lotophagi, who ate of the lotos tree and so forgot everything worth remembering, and lived in slothful ease.

A land of streams ! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go ;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land : far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed : and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmèd sunset lingered low adown
In the red West : thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale ;
A land where all things always seemed the same !
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave ;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore ;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave ; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, " We will return no more ; "

And all at once they sang, " Our island home
Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer roam."

CHORIC SONG

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes ;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness ?
All things have rest : why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
" There is no joy but calm ! "
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things ?

Lo ! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon

Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo ! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life ; ah, why
Should life all labour be ?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last ?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil ? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave ?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful
ease.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream !
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height ;
To hear each other's whispered speech ;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy ;

To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-coloured water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!

Amaranth, A plant with a flaming red flower.
Moly, A herb with a white flower. It was given by Hermes to Odysseus to counteract the spells of the enchantress Circe.

Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak :
The Lotos blows by every winding creek :
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone :
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world :
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong ;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil :

Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered
—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the
shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave
and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

COMMENTARY

Tennyson is the finished artist in words,—his critics call him finicking. Try to find out how he gets his effects. Study, *e.g.*:

(*a*) *Sense by Sound.*

> "All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
> Breathing like one that hath a weary dream."

(*b*) *Repetition.* See the first few lines.

(*c*) *Word-pictures.*

> "Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
> And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
> Along the cliff to fall, and pause, and fall did
> seem."

(*d*) *Apt epithets.* These can be found in almost every line.

(*e*) *Variation of the measure.*

(*f*) *Musical rhyming.*

Is the stanza used in the first part Spenserian?

If you were moved to write a few lines designed to rouse the mariners from their lethargy, what resounding measure or verse-pattern would you select? Perhaps it can be found in the poem itself.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809–1892)

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonnesse about their Lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
" The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be.
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm

So all day long. The first word is resumptive. The poet assumes that we know the story of King Arthur up to the " last great battle of the West," where the king was defeated by the traitor Modred.

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word."
To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
" It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."
So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.
There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
" Hast thou performed my mission which I gave ?

What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."
To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
" Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fëalty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."
Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud :
" And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt ? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ' King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,

Lief, Loved.

Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost."
So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
" What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."
To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
" Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either for lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence ;
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."
Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,

Northern morn, The *Aurora borealis.*

Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed

When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.
Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.
Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge."
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the withered moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset : and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parched with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.
Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
" Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."
And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
" The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seëst—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."
So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

COMMENTARY

This is blank verse, noble in its simplicity. It shows an artistry similar to that of *The Lotos-eaters*, and its effect is obtained by similar means which can readily be discovered.

Malory, from whom Tennyson drew much of his story of Arthur, will supply abundance of material for exercises in this measure, for many of his phrases make lines of blank verse with little or no adaptation. The following extract might be used for this purpose.

"And so as Sir Mordred was at Dover with his host, there came King Arthur with a great navy of ships, and galleys, and carracks. And there was Sir Mordred ready awaiting upon his landing, to let (*i.e.* prevent) him to land upon the land that he was king over. Then there was launching of great boats and small, and full of noble

men of arms, and there was much slaughter of gentle knights, and many a full bold baron was laid full low on both parties. But King Arthur was so courageous that there might no manner of knights let him to land, and his knights fiercely followed him. And so they landed, maugre (*i.e.* in spite of) Sir Mordred and all his power, and put Sir Mordred aback that he fled and all his people. So when this battle was done, King Arthur let bury his people that were dead. And then was noble Sir Gawaine found in a great boat lying more than half dead. When King Arthur wist that Sir Gawaine was laid so low, he went unto him, and there the king made sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawaine in his arms, and thrice he there swooned. And then when he awaked he said, Alas, Sir Gawaine, my sister's son, here now thou liest, the man in the world that I loved most, and now is my joy gone; for now, my nephew Sir Gawaine, I will discover me unto your person; in Sir Launcelot and you I most had my joy, and mine affiance (*i.e.* trust), and now have I lost my joy of you both, wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me."

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(Called "The Faultless Painter")

ROBERT BROWNING (1812–1889)

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,

Andrea del Sarto. "Almost contemporary in age with Raphael, Andrea del Sarto is sometimes regarded as his rival. . . . Andrea excelled in fresco, and there is much of his beautiful work still to be seen in Florence and the neighbouring towns. So swift and sure was his

And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this !
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, either ; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require—
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds !
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less !
You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made.
There's what we painters call our harmony !
A common greyness silvers everything,—

touch that he earned the name of 'the faultless painter.' He is better known to the general public by his oil paintings (see No. 690 in the National Gallery, London). . . . He had in him great possibilities, but they were never fulfilled. There is a note of languor in most of his work which prevents it from reaching greatness. Some attribute this to the overpowering genius of Michael Angelo. In presence of his mighty imaginings we can understand that other artists grew timid. Another explanation is the story of an uncongenial marriage. He loved his wife, but she was faithless to him ; and so a blight fell on his spirit, and all enthusiasm was extinguished. Browning's poem is, in its way, one of the best criticisms we have of the art of Andrea del Sarto."—Mary Innes.

All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
That length of convent wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life He makes us lead !
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !
I feel He laid the fetter : let it lie !
This chamber, for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us ! you don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak ;
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past—
I do what many dream of all their lives
—Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive

To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken—what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art—the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain—
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,

The Urbinate, Raphael Sanzio, born at Urbino in 1483.
George Vasari, A Florentine writer who published his *Lives of the Painters* in 1550.

Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way ;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me ! out of me ! And wherefore out ?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
" God and the glory ! never care for gain.
The Present by the Future, what is that ?
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three ! "
I might have done it for you. So it seems—
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self ;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not—
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,

For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside ;
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward !
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?
And had you not grown restless—but I know—
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct said ;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way ?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was, to have ended there ; then if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !
" Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows

Francis, King of France.

My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Angelo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
" Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours ! "
To Rafael's !—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !
Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he ? why, who but Michael Angelo ?
Do you forget already words like those ?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with !
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?

That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?
I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died;
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,

You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In Heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.
—Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

COMMENTARY

This poem has been chosen partly to show that Browning, who is so often judged to be obscure and difficult, can write with the utmost simplicity, partly because his subject is fresh in English poetry. It is not only a criticism of painting, of which Browning knew much, but a clear picture of human character, of which he knew still more.

Its form is particularly interesting—blank verse, but of such a kind as no reader is tempted to scan in the conventional way, but which must be read with the "speech-rhythm." (See page 83.) How is it distinguished from prose?

Try to put a prose monologue or narrative into this form—say the following, from a story by the Russian writer Anton Tchekov :—

"It needs no straining of memory to recall the rainy twilight autumn evening when I stood with my father in a crowded Moscow street and felt overtaken by a strange illness. I suffered no pain, but my legs gave way, my head hung helplessly on one side, and words stuck in my throat. I felt that I should soon fall on the pavement and swoon away.

"Had I been taken to hospital at the moment, the doctor would have written above my bed the word 'Fames'—a complaint not usually dealt with in medical text-books.

Leonard, Leonardo da Vinci.

"Beside me on the pavement stood my father, in a threadbare summer overcoat and a check cap from which projected a piece of white cotton-wool. On his feet were big, clumsy goloshes. The vain man, fearing that people might see that the big goloshes covered neither boots nor stockings, had cased his legs in old gaiters.

"This poor, unintelligent man, whom I loved all the more the more tattered and dirty became his once smart summer overcoat, had come to the capital five months before to seek work as a clerk. Five months he had tramped the city, seeking employment; only to-day for the first time he had screwed up his courage to beg for alms in the street."

ABT VOGLER

(After he has been extemporizing upon the musical instrument of his invention)

ROBERT BROWNING (1812–1889)

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—

Solomon. There are many stories of Solomon in the Mohammedan "Bible" known as the *Koran.* He is called the king of the genie, but this is probably a mistake. The monarch of these spirits was called "suleyman," and this title appears to have been mistaken for a proper name.

Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved !

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise !
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise !
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest :
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to
match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort
to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to
scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt
with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wan-
dering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale
nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more
near nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the
glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the
Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind
should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their
liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through
the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world
worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall
be anon;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was
made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish
of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed
visibly forth,

All through music and me ! For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth :
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told ;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled :—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are !
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought ;
And there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow the head !

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow ;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.

Never to be again ! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance : is this your comfort to me ?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God : ay, what was shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name ?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands !
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same ?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands ?
There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall live as before ;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more ;
On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that He heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying a while the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

COMMENTARY

This poem is only difficult to the reader who wants to run while he is reading. A little patience, a little sympathy with the power of music, and the stanzas become crystal clear, which does not mean, however, that they can be explained or paraphrased. They must be felt. Deeper and deeper experience of life (and of the finest music) will reveal more and more of their meaning, and this is one of the tests of great poetry, and, indeed, of all great art.

The argument can be readily detached, the definite

silken thread of thought on which the jewelled stanzas are hung; but paraphrase, or imitation, is unthinkable. It is interesting, however, to try to put a portion of *Andrea del Sarto* into this stanza.

The eight-line stanza with lines of irregular beat suits the brooding soliloquy. Note also how the stanza form gives the poet an opportunity of rising again and again, at the end of a stanza, to "the height of this great argument." Some of the most arresting and memorable lines are those which conclude the stanzas.

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822–1888)

I

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes:
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped grasses shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,

The Scholar Gipsy. "There was very lately a lad in the university of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem, as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies, and he gave them an account of the necessities which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others; that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learnt."—GLANVIL, *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

Wattled cotes, Enclosures for sheep, surrounded by hurdles woven of pliant osiers.

And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd, and again renew the quest.

II

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use ;
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

III

Screened is this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sundown, shepherd, will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep :
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade ;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers ;

IV

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,

Quest, The search for the lost scholar, who is supposed by the poet to haunt the fields lying westward from Oxford city.

Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

V

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he knew
Met him, and of his way of life inquired.
Whereat he answered, that the gipsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains ;
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will :
" And I," he said, " the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart :
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

VI

This said, he left them, and returned no more.
But rumours hung about the country side
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring :
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frocked boors
Had found him seated at their entering.

VII

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly :
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer, on thy trace ;

And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place ;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

VIII

For most, I know, thou lov'st retirèd ground.
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the slow punt swings round :
And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

IX

And then they land, and thou art seen no more.
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leafed, white anemone—
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves—
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee.

X

And, above Godstow bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandoned lasher pass,
Have often passed thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown :
Marked thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air ;
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert gone.

XI

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee watching, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine ;
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

XII

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged and shreds of grey,
Above the forest ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food

Lasher, The dark water above a weir in the river.

Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all ;
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

XIII

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge ?
And thou hast climbed the hill
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range,
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.

XIV

But what—I dream ! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy tribe :
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid ;
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

XV

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.
For what wears out the life of mortal men ?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls :

'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

XVI

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire:
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead—
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire.
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have not!

XVII

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Teen, Sorrow, grief.

XVIII

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven : and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled ;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new ;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah, do not we, wanderer, await it too ?

XIX

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer ; and amongst us one,
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne ;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days ;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

XX

This for our wisest : and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair :
But none has hope like thine.

One who most has suffered. This is thought to refer to Tennyson, whose *In Memoriam*, written after the death of his friend Hallam, had just been published.

Thou through the fields and through the woods
dost stray,
Roaming the countryside, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

XXI

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames ;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear !
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood !
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

XXII

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade—
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales.

As Dido did. Dido, queen of Carthage, slew herself because Æneas, Prince of Troy, had deserted her. Later, the prince met her shade, and endeavoured, in vain, to excuse himself for his desertion by the plea that he had been forced by the gods to leave Carthage.

> " Disdainfully she looked, then, turning round,
> But fixed her eyes unmoved upon the ground,
> And what he swears and says regards no more
> Than the deaf rocks when the loud billows roar."

XXIII

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly !
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest ;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made :
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

XXIV

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles !
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægean isles :
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine ;
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

XXV

The young light-hearted Masters of the waves ;
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily
To where the Atlantic raves

The Midland waters, The Mediterranean Sea.
Syrtes, Sandbanks southward from Sicily and near the African coast.

Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come ;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

COMMENTARY

The poet has made an imperishable picture of the wandering scholar haunting the neighbourhood of Oxford, but he uses the wanderer's supposed happy freedom from care and doubt to make a favourable contrast with the tendencies and characteristics of his own age. This is somewhat artificial and unconvincing (for each age has its drawbacks, and the "good old days" never existed), and we turn gladly from the theme to consider the finished art of the poem—its wonderful, purely English rural sketches and complete pictures ; its atmosphere of unvexed quiet ; its constant expression of sense by sound ; the carefully selected epithets ; the beautiful similes, one of them, in the last lines of the poem, extended to form a complete framed picture.

The poem is a "pastoral elegy," so called because (1) it deals with rustic life, with the shepherd and his flocks, the woods and fields ; (2) it is melancholy or pensive in tone, as an elegy ought to be (see page 75). The stanza of ten lines is unusual, and the rhyming attractive in its intricacy. The poet's power is shown in the smoothness of a composition which must be contained within such a strait-waistcoat as this rhyme plan. We search in vain for clichés or fill-up phrases. There would be nothing particularly objectionable in a parody on this stanza. Try to write one giving the wanderer's own ideas of his state of life written on a wet day.

THE BLESSÈD DAMOZEL

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828–1882)

THE blessèd Damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven :
Her blue grave eyes were deeper much
Than a deep water, even.
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift
On the neck meetly worn ;
And her hair, lying down her back,
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseem'd she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers ;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers ;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To *one* it is ten years of years :
. . . Yet now, here in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me,—her hair
Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing : the Autumn-fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the terrace of God's house
That she was standing on,—

By God built over the sheer depth
In which Space is begun ;
So high, that looking downward thence,
She could scarce see the sun.

It lies from Heaven across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and blackness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

But in those tracts, with her, it was
The peace of utter light
And silence. For no breeze may stir
Along the steady flight
Of seraphim ; no echo there,
Beyond all depth or height.

Heard hardly, some of her new friends,
Playing at holy games,
Spake, gentle-mouthed, among themselves,
Their virginal chaste names ;
And the souls, mounting up to God,
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself, and stooped
Into the vast waste calm ;
Till her bosom's pressure must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixt lull of Heaven, she saw
Time, like a pulse, shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove,
In that steep gulf, to pierce

The swarm ; and then she spake, as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

" I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
" Have I not prayed in solemn Heaven ?
On earth, has he not prayed ?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength ?
And shall I feel afraid ?

" When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand, and go with him
To the deep wells of light,
And we will step down as to a stream
And bathe there in God's sight.

" We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps tremble continually
With prayer sent up to God ;
And where each need, revealed, expects
Its patient period.

" We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Sometimes is felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His name audibly.

" And I myself will teach to him,—
I myself, lying so,—
The songs I sing here ; which his mouth
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,

Expects, Awaits.
The Dove, The Holy Spirit in visible form.

Finding some knowledge at each pause,
And some new thing to know."

(Alas ! to *her* wise simple mind
These things were all but known
Before : they trembled on her sense,—
Her voice had caught their tone.
Alas for lonely Heaven ! Alas
For life wrung out alone !

Alas, and though the end were reach'd ? . . .
Was *thy* part understood
Or borne in trust ? And for her sake
Shall this too be found good ?—
May the close lips that knew not prayer
Praise ever, though they would ?)

" We two," she said, " will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies :—
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

" Circle-wise sit they, with bound locks
And bosoms coverèd ;
Into the fine cloth, white like flame,
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

" He shall fear, haply, and be dumb.
Then I will lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak :
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

" Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel—the unnumbered solemn heads
Bowed with their aureoles :
And Angels, meeting us, shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

" There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me :—
To have more blessing than on earth
In nowise ; but to be
As then we were,—being as then
At peace. Yea, verily.

" Yea, verily ; when he is come
We will do thus and thus :
Till this my vigil seem quite strange
And almost fabulous ;
We two will live at once, one life ;
And peace shall be with us."

She gazed, and listened, and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
" All this is when he comes." She ceased :
The light thrilled past her, filled
With Angels, in strong level lapse.
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their flight
Was vague mid the poised spheres.
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

Fabulous, Literally, like a fable.

COMMENTARY

This poem strikes a new, unfamiliar, but strangely attractive note. It is unlike anything we have been considering in this book. Yet it is difficult to describe its peculiar qualities.

It is a strange fusion (not a contrast) of the ethereal and the physical, of the heavenly and the earthly. After a mystical description which the mind can scarcely grasp, come the lines

> " Till her bosom's pressure must have made
> The bar she leaned on warm ; "

while in the fourth stanza from the end we are given a wonderful picture of perfected earthly love.

As we might expect from an artist poet, the verses are full of colour. There is also an occasional quaintness of expression which approaches affectation in the use of a word like " herseemed " ; but this is outweighed by the haunting beauty of certain phrases and lines—' one of God's choristers " ; " their virginal chaste names " ;

> " The wonder was not yet quite gone
> From that still look of hers,"

and many others.

The six-line stanza and the rhyming are full of interest. Compare the poem in this respect with others in this volume.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

NOVEMBER 4, 1889

A. C. SWINBURNE (1837–1909)

I

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,
  Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.
Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,
  Fair and flawless from face to feet,
Hailed of all when the world was golden,
Loved of lovers whose names beholden
Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden
  Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang : but for men that love her,
  Souls that hear not her word in vain,
Earth beside her and heaven above her
  Seem but shadows that wax and wane.
Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,
Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses
  Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish
  Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,
Sighs for love of the life they cherish,
  Laughs to know that it lives and dies,
Dies for joy of its life, and lives
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives
  Change that bids it subside and rise.

The deep sea's daughter. Venus Aphrodite, goddess of love, was born of the foam of the sea.

II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,
Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering
Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.
Dawn and even and noon are one,
Veiled with vapour and void of sun ;
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing
Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,
Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,
As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,
Touched by dawn or subdued by night.
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,
Swings the rollers to westward, clad
With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,
Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,
Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,
Fill the world of the skies whereunder
Heaves and quivers and pants aloud
All the world of the waters, hoary
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,
That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder
With light more living and word more proud.

III

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,
Strife more sweet than peace, of shoreless waves whose glee
Scorns the shore and loves the wind that leaves them free,
Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life,
Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters crowd,
Fast as autumn days toward winter : yet it seems
Here that autumn wanes not, here that woods and streams
Lose not heart and change not likeness, chilled and bowed,
Warped and wrinkled : here the days are fair as dreams.

IV

O russet-robed November,
What ails thee so to smile ?
Chill August, pale September
Endured a woeful while,
And fell as falls an ember
From forth a flameless pile :
But golden-girt November
Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning
As wanes the morning moon,
Here falling, here refraining,
Outbraves the pride of June
With statelier semblance, feigning
No fear lest death be soon :
As though the woods thus waning
Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken
By grey December's breath,
These lordlier growths that sicken
And die for fear of death
Should feel the sense requicken
That hears what springtide saith
And thrills for love, spring-stricken
And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter
That stings and spurs thy sea
Doth yet but feed and feast her
With glowing sense of glee :
Calm chained her, storm released her,
And storm's glad voice was he ;
South-wester or north-easter,
Thy winds rejoice the sea.

V

A dream, a dream is it all—the season,
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore ?
A day-born dream of divine unreason,
A marvel moulded of sleep—no more ?
For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving
Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving
Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving
Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
A peace more happy than lives on land,
Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure
The dreaming head and the steering hand.
I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,
The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
And close mine eyes for delight past measure,
And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture
Falls as from heaven that its light feet clomb,
So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture
Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.
To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—
Such joy the vision of man saw never ;
For here too soon will a dark day sever
The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer
  At once and brighter than dreams that flee,
The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer
  Abides, remembered as truth may be.
Not all the joy and not all the glory
Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary ;
For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,
  And here to south of them swells the sea.

COMMENTARY

Here is a fresh theme—the delight of swimming not only in a summer sea, but at all times and in all seasons. The changeful motion of the waters is expressed in the varied measure of the stanzas, and their sound is reproduced in phrase after phrase.

The reader must attend closely and be familiar with the changing moods of the sea, and his attention will be rewarded with a succession of beautiful pictures, including a new aspect of November ; while for sensuous feeling the last four lines of the second stanza would be difficult to parallel in English poetry.

One or two phrases seem to suggest that this devoted swimmer frequented the coast of south-west Cornwall.

The variations in stanza and rhyming are well worth study. A poet so accomplished did not change his measure without reason.

The poem suggests a search for some other rhythmic exercise, and an attempt at a stanza or two in far-off imitation

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

FRANCIS THOMPSON (1859–1907)

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days ;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years ;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind ; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter,
Up vista'd hopes, I sped ;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
" All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities ;
(For though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,

Wist not to, Knew not how to.

And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars ;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn : Be sudden ; to eve : Be soon—
With thy young skyey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover !
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see !
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue ;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue ;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged His chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid ;
But still within the littie children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me !
I turned me to them very wistfully ;
But iust as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,

Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
" Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me " (said I) " your delicate fellowship ;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done :
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies ;
I knew how the clouds arise,
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings ;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with ; made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine ;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat ;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah ! we know not what each other says,
These things and I ; in sound *I* speak—

Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth ;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness :
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.

Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
And past those noisèd Feet
A Voice comes yet more fleet—
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not
Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke !
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee ;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me : grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap,
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist ;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding ; cords of all too weak account
For earth, with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah ! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,

Suffering no flowers except its own to mount ?
Ah ! must—
Designer infinite !—
Ah ! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it ?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust ;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is ; what is to be ?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind ?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds ;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity :
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again ;
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned ;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith,
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death ?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit ;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea :
" And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard ?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me !
Strange, piteous, futile thing !
Wherefore should any set thee love apart ?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught " (He said),
" And human love needs human meriting :

Limn, Draw or design.
Bruit, Report or rumour.

How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot ?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art !
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me ?

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms,
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home :
Rise, clasp My hand, and come."

Halts by me that footfall :
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly ?
" Ah, fondest, blindest weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest !
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

COMMENTARY

The theme is as simple as the treatment is almost overpowering. The soul of man can find no rest except in the love of this " tremendous Lover," who throughout the poem is nameless. Self-sufficiency; love of one's kind, of man, maid, or child; love and intimate study of Nature;—all alike are unsatisfying, though in the love of the insistent Pursuer all these things find an added meaning. The soul having yielded learns :

" All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home."

But with what wonderful imagery, energy, passion, tenderness, and abandon the long pursuit is described—the modern poet's " Pilgrim's Progress." What stores of epithet, simile, metaphor, swelling lines of organ tone or tender whispering phrases are marshalled into perfect

order. Life alone can teach to you the poet's full meaning, slowly and unmistakably as the Blessèd Damozel teaches her lover the songs of heaven,

" which his mouth
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
Finding some knowledge at each pause,
And some new thing to know."

THE END

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